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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HAPPY WOMAN

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HAPPY WOMAN

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1914

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NEW YORK

Published, May, 1914

TO
THOSE WHO WORK
BY
ONE WHO WORKS

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

THE publishers are pledged not to reveal the identity of the author of this remarkable book. For reasons which will be obvious to any reader of the book, the author has made this a condition of its publication. But it is a fact that the author is a woman well known as a writer and worker and the book is the story of her life; it traces her growth from childhood up; it shows the physical and mental and spiritual growth of the writer; the struggle and stress, the hopes and joys of the girl and woman; the development of her philosophy of hope and happiness.

The narrative is very human, depicting as it does the thoughts and feelings of, first the young girl, then the woman on all the important phases of life's problems.

It is an inspiring book, for it breathes through its pages the note of a spirit, strong in its power to suffer and stronger still in its power to hope and enjoy. It is a helpful and suggestive book, for it unfolds new vistas of thought and ideas.

It teaches the gospel of self-forgetfulness, through happy and useful work.

"Be busy and there will be no time for self-pity or worry," has been one of the author's principles. To countless women to-day the book will carry its message of hopefulness and cheer.

It is so sane, so human, so sincere, and so intensely interesting—this true story of a woman's hopes and fears and inspirations.

FOREWORD

It need hardly be stated here—these are the random thoughts of a busy woman, and of a woman who is happy because she works. Woman in industry is no new phenomenon in the world. Women have been in industry since time began, since "Adam delved and Eve span." Only in modern days industry has gone out of the home; and woman has followed it out. Industrious women have been in industry from creation. It is no new problem. It is an old problem projected out into the complexities of a fearfully complicated modern world.

Nor are these thoughts a series of fairy stories, of theories as to how things *ought* to be. They are narratives of fact, as to how things are, disguised so slightly as not to disguise in the least, the thread of absolute truth. For disguises there are. Each chapter is a record of a segment from a life. These records could not have been given except on condition that the persons should remain anonymous.

The whole series sprang from a chance remark in an editorial office one day. The world

was talking about a wail of woe purporting to come from a woman who worked. It didn't ring true. The woman set out to pity herself; and she succeeded admirably; but the serio-comic thing is—the workers don't wail. I work; and love it. All the women I know, who are worth knowing, work in the home, or out of it, and glory in work. I say this irrespective of the fact, whether they own a mill, or a million. The happy women are the women who work; the unhappy ones, those who are idle. I turned and asked the editor why we were voicing the wail of woe, when all the women he knew, who were worth while, and all the women I knew, who were worth while—were workers. Why didn't we sound the note of joy for those who sing over their looms?

And so the thoughts came forth random-wise—snatched from the days of a busy woman—in no sense a story, in no sense a plot, simply segments of human life, hints of things rather than things themselves, an interpretation of woman in the great modern economic world.

The eighteenth century was the century of discovery and exploration. The nineteenth century was the century of exploitation and invention. Are we entering on a century when we shall discover, explore and map another world—the world of spirit powers? What part

is woman going to play in this new world? Is it to prepare her for this part that the impetus has come, forcing her into new arenas, of which even our mothers did not dream? I don't know. I only know the push has come, shoving us out. Where are we going I don't know. I only know if the day's work be well done we shall arrive at that best of all promised lands—the Land of Satisfied Souls. These thoughts are not written for married women; and they are not written for single women; and they are not written for women in the home; and they are not written for women out of the home. They are written for women *who know;* whether they are scrubbing departmental store stairs, crooning over babies, clipping off dividend coupons, or cheering the despairing heart of some lover in the struggle. Noisy disputations, the pros and cons of feminists and anti-feminists—have no place here. Why should they? Like the feline night-prowlers, they express nothing but their own antagonisms. Let us watch rather for the white sun-lit spaces of the dewy dawn, when one must listen for the voices of the Morning and brood over what their music means as Mary brooded over her Unborn.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Publishers' Note	vii
	Foreword	xi
I.	Concerning Parasites and the Sisterhood of Discontent	1
II.	Acquiring Efficiency for the Work of Life	29
III.	Only a Teacher	63
IV.	When God Went Back on Me	96
V.	The Easiest Way	126
VI.	The Respectable Sign on a Blind Pig	160
VII.	The Sisterhood of Service	211
VIII.	Is There Anything in Newspaper Life for Women?	248
IX.	The Vortex—A True Story Concerning Sub Averages	299
X.	The Minimum Wage for Women	340
XI.	An Awakening or a Revolt?	367

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HAPPY WOMAN

CHAPTER I

CONCERNING PARASITES AND THE SISTERHOOD OF DISCONTENT

Are there any happy women left on this good green earth?

One is constrained to ask because we are universally told that half the world is in rebellion—the woman half. Married women in the cage want to get out. Unmarried women out of the cage want to break in. In fact, half a world of women are supposed to be wailing because they can't spend life in a sort of *dolce far niente* dream with both hands folded idly in their laps. I say "supposed," because, as a matter of fact in real life, you know and I know that the workers are the happy ones—married or single—the workers are the ones who sing; the idle the ones who wail.

We are told—just as if the world hadn't known that fact for countless years—that the highest duty of life is manufacturing new human beings—alias babies; and that women are in open revolt against this duty. Yet as a matter of fact—not platform twaddle—not pyrotechnics to catch the vote of lustful men—we know that the supply of love-born babies is not dropping off; and that, for the first time in the history of the race, as much thought and care are given to keeping the babies, that are born, alive as to keeping up the birth rate of hypothetical unborn babies.

We are told by investigating commissions that women, who work behind the counter, over the typewriter, over the dish pan, in the school room, above the loom, in the factory, behind the broom are slaves of new industrial conditions; that they are desperately unhappy; that when the first gray hairs come, the iron has entered into their souls, or something like that. (If the iron went as tonic in fishy blood, and gave some kick to the whine for self pity—a lifting kick, we'll say—there might be some point to it.) But the women that you know and I know—outside the people on the job at so much per for investigating commissions—behind the counter, over the

typewriter, above the loom, behind the broom; the women, who do things in the home or out of it, *who stand for plus, not minus,* for performers, not parasites—are not idly poking irons of introspection in and out of their souls. They literally don't understand what all this talk hubbub is about. "Big talk: little do"—I have heard some of them say.

I am a woman; and I am living in the thick of life; and I have seen all sides of it; and I have worked at high pace and high pressure with fury and joy in the home and out of it; and I do not find this wail of woe purporting to come from womanhood rings true. It is not true of me. It is not true of the women, who work, that I know. The women I know who work—don't find love ashes of roses; nor ashes of Sodom; nor joy, a fading phantom. Life to the worker is a dream come true, with nightmare giants of troubled sleep, sometimes, of course; but always at dawn, fear fading in light. I am not writing this because of the standing policy of the average American editor—to make all stories end happily. I am not writing a story. I am setting down the actual facts of a life begun under handicap; and I want to set down that the older I grow, the more I find life a more beautiful thing than all the school girl gush and pointless

longings of what the poets call "youth." No matter how hard we think our own special handicap has been—poverty, or inherited disease, or the tragedy of wrong parenthood, or a personality hopelessly askew—I do not think any life ever came into this world without its own handicap. Why we are handicapped—who can tell? It may be to compel the soul to work out its own hardihood getting rid of the handicap, or to commit suicide sinking under it. When I call life a dream come true, it is not in blindness to the wrecks and tragedies and crimes that litter every foot of life's progress. I know there are more tragedies hidden mute in the home than ever were shouted from the housetops by the Sisterhood of Discontent; but I know also how much of this waste of the gift of life results from the collision with the hidden handicap of the personality.

Having found life a dream come true, I ask myself (as I know multitudes of women workers inside and outside the home are asking themselves) is all this wail of woe genuine? Is the old world vocal of womanhood out of joint? Is there a great Sisterhood of Discontent? Or is it that we are so attuned to the wail of discontent that we fail to note a world vocal with the music of the spheres; joy at work; service rendered in gladness, not grudgingly; zest of

life; reapers garnering sheaves in sunlight; women laughing with children at play?

The new mental attitude to life has come so unexpectedly that it has left some ancient sex-poses forever behind; the wife-beater calling himself "woman's natural protector," and at once proceeding to break her protected head; the sheep-type of woman pretending she likes that kind of protection; Amelia fainting with terror of her own safety in the arms of the wicked Don Juan; Don Juan pretending he is a very devil of a fellow engaged in the business of eating babies in the dark! Without knowing it, we have somehow come to regard self-pity as the beggar's hat of a mean spirit stuck out for alms. The heroine of old (she, herself, was never by any possibility supposed to be half-past sixteen) set out joyously, coyly, I was going to say "unblushingly"—only, she was really supposed to blush bucketfuls—to harpoon a man for her support; and we thought it pretty nearly all right, if a little soulful longing were mixed in as a prime flavor. To-day, we tear that pose to ten thousand analytic tatters. "What's she after?" "What can she do?" "What's she going to give in return besides sweet smiles and sugared drafts on the family cash box?" And

if all she has to offer is sex, all draped in wistaria and roses and wistful soul longings, of course, we aren't surprised that she gets spurious coin back in return, bronze and copper and brass and putty, where she expected pure gold.

Quite unknown to ourselves as a generation, we have come to eye the parasite askance, be she rich or poor. It doesn't matter whether she belongs to the orchid or to the mosquito family. The woman, who is sorry for herself because she has to earn her living *outside* the home, is the very woman, who would be sorry for herself earning her living *inside* the home. If she is sorry for herself in an office, what would she be in the pangs of giving birth to a new life?

My early days were passed in a Western city during the depression of the collapse from one of the worst real estate booms, that ever sent a whole community up in a crazy balloon of inflated hopes, only to drop them in a ten years' slough of reaction. I remember one speculator, who became a paper millionaire in anticipation of a railroad coming in, who, six months after the advent of the new line, was carried away to an asylum, where he passed the rest of his days bent almost double pick-

ing up imaginary diamonds. A politician in the same place, who between dawn and dark unexpectedly as a bolt out of the blue, had made his half million, built a palace calling it after some castle or other. When the boom collapsed, he hadn't money enough of those paper thousands to light the fire in his furnace. He had to borrow money to leave the country.

In your mind, draw a line on the map from St. Louis to St. Paul. The depression prevailing in our city was typical of conditions in every little new hamlet west of that line from the time of the Panic of 1893 up to 1898. At the time, we were all desperately sorry for ourselves. It isn't a pleasant awakening to think you have a lot worth $120,000, and to find in a day that what you really have is a mortgage debt for $12,000, against property, which you can't sell for fifteen cents and which carries taxes of $3,000 a year. We were all desperately sorry for ourselves. Yet, looking back, we can all laugh at the hardships. We didn't laugh then. We hustled. Actual hunger never came within the majority of homes; but it came so near the doors that I can guess and have often as a child dreamed what the Phantom Fright looks like when it stalks out of the dark to spring at the struggler's throat. There

was one dream I used to have over and over in the darkest years of the city's collapse. It was of a half-naked figure flying along the edge of a precipice with two wolves snapping at its heels; and I do not think there were many people in the city at that time, who did not know what the sensations of the runner must have been. We were all, every one of us, on the edge.

Though hunger never actually entered most of the homes, it came horribly near many a home that kept a brave front face to the street. We laugh when reminiscent now. We didn't laugh then. I think it was the Spirit of the West that sustained us buoyantly under conditions that would have plunged an older community into slums. There were carefully nurtured women, who would have gone hungry that first year of the Panic, if husbands and brothers had not been good shots to keep the family larder filled with prairie chicken and ducks. I know of one woman who, for six weeks before her first child was born, lived alone in a prairie shanty on the outskirts of the city with nothing to eat but potato meal. An editor, who at the time represented the city in the Federal Government and who used to cheer the community's heart by thunderous editorials on the glorious future of the West,

would have gone hungry that winter of '93 if "the boys" had not suspected that "the old man" looked gaunt. They got up a shooting party and sent him a present of half a dozen barrels of wild geese. I have heard him "in his cups" curse the hands that were feeding him; but nobody replied; and nobody told; and the friendships cemented in such hardships were embedded in a reinforced concrete.

I am stating these circumstances to make it clear that we were face to face with *realities,* not *theories;* and *the beautiful thing about a reality is that it never lies.* You learn to look at facts without blinders; without side-stepping or flinching. A woman, who has always lived the mural existence of a protected home, is so terribly apt to mistake what "*she thinks*" for the great fact of "*what is.*" If she doesn't like a fact, she shuts her eyes to it. You can't do that when you are bumping into facts that you don't like. So it was not all a disadvantage that the hard times taught us to face facts unflinchingly.

One of the curious features of the collapse was its reaction on what the study chair theorists call "woman's sphere." Those were the days, when all the public prints were full of blasts and counterblasts of argument as to whether woman ought to go out of the home to

become a wage-earner. We hadn't time for those arguments then in the West. We were not confronted with arguments. We were face to face with hunger. We had to work, or starve. "Ought not woman to stay in her own sphere of manufacturing babies?" the disputants would ask truculently. We hadn't any time to answer. We had to go out and work, or see the babies, that were already manufactured, go hungry. *It seems to me that is typical of the whole woman movement. It isn't a rebellion, a revolt, a megalomania of individualism run riot, the morbid monstrosity of a woman trying to be a man, to grow side-whiskers and wear trousers. It is a new economic arena, into which woman has been forcibly pushed by unbending necessity.*

Let me give some more examples of that necessity. In three weeks in that city eleven hundred real estate agents closed their offices and took down their signs. What do you suppose the real estate agents' families did about bread and butter just then? The doctor, who became the most famous surgeon west of the Mississippi preceding the fame of the Mayos, told me that he slept on the chairs in his office that winter, and except for one mid-day meal, lived on peanuts and beer and hot Scotch.

He died in receipt of an income of $100,000 a year, of a disease contracted in those starvation days; but what do you imagine his old mother and two elderly sisters, whom he was thought to be supporting, did during that hard stress? They went out as wage earners—I shall not say how; for that is their affair, not mine; but, to me, the funny feature of it was that this same doctor was a most uncompromising foe to the woman movement. If his mother and sisters had not worked, he would not have had even that one mid-day meal.

I think of another case, a convent-bred girl, buxom, clean, laughing, good-natured, capable, with stolid, solid but at the same time the most passionate belief that a woman's only sphere was to be a loving wife and a most multitudinous mother. It is funny how life knocks our little self-appointed missions on the head; and when the half-gods go, beats us, prods us, bayonets us up to the altars on our knees before the true! Just when the boom collapsed, this girl's father came to his death either by suicide, or falling in front of a train. Her mother attested her grief by at once buying on credit about two thousand dollars worth of deepest mourning. It was found that the life insurance had lapsed and the whole estate amounted to a horrible minus plus nine younger chil-

dren to be fed. If this girl had not thrown her theories to the winds, and plunged into the arena of the wage-earners, the home would have been seized by the sheriff and the family turned on the street. She had to take care of the babies already born, and let the unborn ones take care of themselves. She taught kindergarten, coached French, helped a convent in German, and laughed and danced her way along under the load, and worked doggedly at paying those debts, besides educating and supporting the other nine till they could support themselves. At thirty-eight she married an Englishman, with a right to sit in the House of Lords. Society sat up aghast, then received her with open arms.

"*How* did she do it?" one shoddy disappointed mother asked.

"She didn't do it. It was *what she was* did it," I tried to explain. Your little mission, what you set out to do doesn't matter. *It is what you are, what you become in what you do that wins or loses life's game for you.* Why did *he* do it? Because he happened to know what she had unostentatiously been doing all her life; but there are many things that he will never know.

He will never know, for instance, that one summer when she was supposed to be in Eu-

rope on a holiday, she was secretly comforting a remote relative, who in the scramble of a speculative era had landed in the penitentiary. He will never know that once, when she wore her clothes so many seasons that friends murmured, she was using her allowance for dress to shield a woman in disgrace. And I never saw a tear of self-pity on this worker's face. I never heard her utter one complaint against life. I never heard her blame others for the load bequeathed to her willing shoulders. She once told me that the most worrying duty she ever undertook was her husband's first family of girls brought up in a sort of *dolce far niente* of pampered dreams of what life was to give them, not what they were to give life.

"The trouble is," she once burst out, "these girls have been brought up expecting everything to be done for them. Their indolent selfishness repels the kind of friends they need; and when people leave them to themselves, they get peevish at life. If they had been taught to do something; *noblesse oblige* if you like, that we have to do something for every blessed minute we are alive to justify our being alive at all they would have learned to forget themselves. I am going to put—yes, you needn't shout, I'm going to put —— in a business office."

I did shout. "What, in business! You, who think woman's sphere——?"

"Shut up," she said. "Emerson says only fools and cowards are consistent."

So I could go on to tell of hosts of women, shaken out by the Panic, that turned everything upside down, from all their little conventional pigeon holes and sheep cotes and Chinese boots. Indeed, the Panic of '93 did more than anything else I know, than all the arguments and pros and cons to take the foot bindings of prejudice, the Chinese boots of tradition, off the feet of Western women.

"I couldn't—I simply couldn't—become a parasite," said a Southern woman, who has risen to be head of a great brokerage cotton agency. "Women in industry aren't new. Industrious women have always been in industry. It is merely that of late years, so many industries have gone out of the home that we have had to sit with empty hands by silent looms, or else follow the industries out of the home to the place where they have gone."

It does not sound like a wail of woe from a Sisterhood of Discontent—does it? In fact, when the Panic shook us all out of our little pigeon holes of prejudice in '93, I do not know

of a single woman—wife, daughter, sister—efficient and self-respecting, who did not put her shoulder to the wheel, to lift finances out of the slough where they had fallen. We did not talk of woman's sphere and domestic virtues. We rolled up our sleeves and jumped into the arena of work. There were the drum beaters of woe, of course, who talked vaguely of former grandeur and of the fearful come-down this pioneer rough-and-tumble had been to them; but as they talked, some little slip, unmanicured nails, perhaps, the twist of a word, the slur of an articulation, the wrong tang of slang, a slant of sidewise eyes, put the seal of damnation on their revelation; and we came to know in that hard stress, when every hand was needed to turn, push, pull, oil the wheels of life, that *only the nogoods pretended to be too good to work.*

Into this big free hard arena of Western work, I came as a child from the East. As we none of us get shaken out of our pigeon boxes of prejudice, *out of the prisons of our own personality, which are the deepest dungeons of all,* without a flutter of hopes and fears on callow wings, I may as well set down the facts. They are not pleasant. They were horribly painful; and, as I look back, I loathe myself

for having paid any more attention to the pain than a child does to a bump. Of course, if you poultice a bump long enough, you can make a perpetual tenderness on the spot—even an ulcer.

We had not yet moved West.

Always, there had been something in the home that made us children want to play outside in the sunlight. We would never stay in. Winter or summer, we wanted to do all our playing outside. It came to the point where I would let finger tips poking through holes in mits freeze before I would go in to warm up. I didn't want to miss one second of being alive. I did not know then that what drove me to the sunlight outside was an intangible, indefinable shadow inside. I only knew that I was happier outside; and I carry about with me to this day two slightly stubbed finger tips from freezings and thawings, which I would never acknowledge. I knew that each of the brothers had left home just as soon as he could obtain a position yielding a living. I knew that the sisters were kept away at school as long as the money could be made to last. Fortunately, it did not last down to me; so that I stayed at home long enough to learn what the shadow was inside that drove the children outside.

We lived in a very beautiful country bordering the lower of one of the Great Lakes. The passion for the outdoors made friends for me of every horse, cow, dog, cat, chicken and bird on the place. If I had not been the youngest, I suppose I should have annexed the baby to this list, too. I knew more intimately than I knew human playfellows, the blue warblers, that call flute notes in June, the yellow finches that chirp and twitter late in July, the long wedge-shaped lines of wild geese that pilfer wheat lands in autumn; and I have lain in the fields, whistling back their call by the hour. If you lie very still, wild birds are full of curiosity, especially crows and geese; and to see how near you could bring the old ganders honking down on investigating tours would send the most delicious thrills of adventure up and down a child's spine. How I escaped accident in the stables, I don't know; for neither my parents nor the hired hands could keep me out of the danger zone. I took extemporized rides on broad backed Durham cows that "hooked." I never went round a horse's heels when unwatched. I dodged through under their bodies and was never kicked. A showy pet carriage horse once lifted me with his teeth; but a thick coat protected the shoulder bone; and once a young heavy draught Clydesdale gave my par-

ents the scare of their lives. I had gone to a back field to summon the hired man. The good natured fellow put me on the colt's back. I was curious to know whether so heavy a draft horse could gallop. The young man was engaged shutting the railroad gate that led up the lane. I gave that horse a kick in the soft of the flank, where the gentlest horse on earth will suffer no liberties; and I don't think he stopped demonstrating his kicking abilities at both ends for the length of a mile. He had the time of his life for ten full minutes.

"Hang on, don't let go," came a terrified yell behind. The young fellow was afraid to pursue for fear of sending the obstreperous colt over the fence.

"Well, miss," he admonished confidentially later, "I guess you learned when you've raised the devil that you have to hang on, or break your neck."

I had. The lesson proved useful later, when we all went through that Western Panic.

The constant companionship with living real things gives a child a curious indifference to dead things—that is, dead ones that should be alive; dolls that do nothing but roll beautiful "goo eyes" and squeak out inane remarks; rocking horse toys, that romp round a room

kicking their heels and back again, never getting anywhere. I had never the slightest interest in make-believe toys. If they put them in my Christmas stocking, I threw them behind the door. Once an uncle fresh from England with very pronounced English ideas about proper training for girls (he was a bachelor, of course) took me in hand with a good scolding about contempt for dolls—"Little girls ought to like dolls; because dolls were little girls' babies." I told him I loved babies; but dolls were cheats; they couldn't do a thing but roll their eyes. He departed in disgust. I sat down to ponder. This stupid wax thing in my hand had brought undeserved rebuke. Criminals in human life were hanged, whether by heels or head I did not know; but I took a spool of thread and hanged that stupid wax-faced idiot by the heels to the door knob. Then, I went out to the real things, the pups and the kittens and the colts. After that Christmas, no more inane toys fell to my lot. I was given full bent with living real things. Poor Uncle Jim! He is an old man now, but still advising other people on their morals and their manners; but he has made a failure of life. It has blinked him with "goo" eyes all the way through—wax-faced cheats that melt in heat, and break in stress, not realities with

whom, if you "raise the devil, you have to hang on or break your neck."

That love of realities bred by God's gift of staunch animal friends has stuck through life; sometimes, a horribly uncomfortable thing, like a burr in my chest; then again, a pilot star to a promised land. In after life when meeting doll-types; wax-faced, soft-haired, eyes limpid as sky-water, with display of all the little doll graces, tinkling ear-rings, a show of pearly teeth, a roll of expressionless eyes, inane remarks, the old feeling of affront would come back; and I have never seen what is known as the doll type of man without recalling these rocking horse toys that couldn't do anything but just romp round and back again. Is this, too, typical of the changed attitude in woman's outlook on life, of her reaching out past make-believes to realities? Is she going to break out of her doll house?

There were rare good days spent in the open meadows with the whole dumb world for playfellows. Sundays in good weather were spent under a big willow in an old garden listening to story books. When the autumn and spring rains came, we became discoverers of unknown worlds rafting uncharted seas on voy-

ages across swollen brooks and mud puddles. There were no "merry-go-rounds," or "shoot the chutes"; but we did attempt running Niagara by sliding down a water spout during a plunging shower straight into the rain barrel. Outsiders and grown-ups were not invited to this function. The exigencies of the case required exit by a low roof window and "nighties" tied à la Turkish costume. The acrobat able to endure longest under the deluge of the spout was awarded highest applause. There were sugarings off in the maple woods in spring, when taffy on bass wood chips and taffy in belts of elastic syrup hardening to the frost got inextricably tangled in pig tail hair and red-riding-hoods. These celebrations were usually held by starlight round a huge log fire. That out-door world afforded little feet a chance to chase real adventure and real romance down the real paths of everyday life; and I never see the feet of youth on the ageless quest of romance along city streets, but I know that if we children had been born in the gutter and those children of the city streets had been born to our open meadows—we, too, would have mistaken painted wax faces and make-believe hobby horses for the real thing, and come to age cheated of youth.

There comes a time when we know that we have suddenly awakened to a realization of life. The awakening may come in a great joy, or a great love, or a great sorrow, or all three; so that we hardly know whether the pain of love is greater than its joy, or the joy greater than its pain; but when for a moment the veil of things lifts, we fall on our faces before Life.

I had known that the others of the family as they came to their early teens, scattered from the home nest. I had come to know that the shadow in the home was deepening; but what it was, childhood could not define. The English uncle had gone West. Our father had gone West. The whole country from Atlantic to Pacific was beginning to feel the pinch that shook us all out of our pigeon boxes in the Panic of '93. Everybody was hard up. Financial worry had come to be a constant invisible presence in the home; but it was not that.

The revelation came one beautiful spring day, when the mist was on the meadows and among the cobwebby tender green of the May foliage. It was Sunday. When we had all been polished and furbished up to go off to some church festival instead of passing the afternoon under the willow tree, I had a feeling

that we were being packed off for some reason. Our father had come back to make arrangements to move us West; and somehow there was something in the air. I couldn't help suspecting that both my mother and father were mentally distressed. I ran round to the back of the house and came unheard on my mother standing very still by a rain pool in the orchard. She did not see me in time to hide the secret revealed on her face. I had caught the expression on the face reflected in the pool before she looked up. It was despair of life; the utter end of hope; heartbreak mute for a life time. She did not speak. Neither did I. I was not ten years old; and childhood fell away like a worn cloak from that day.

I knew; and yet I could not have told what I knew. I knew from that day that I must earn. I knew from that day that I must fight, that *there is no peace without a victory,* that "he who fights and runs away and lives to fight another day," might just as well *fight the fight at the first challenge of fate,* and win or die trying to win; for *if he runs away, there is no hiding place in Heaven or Hell—defeat will pursue him.* Sooner or later he must turn and make his stand, and do or die. It isn't as we would have it. It is as life ordains. I knew that Phantom Fright and Want and that

tragedy of all tragedies—a living one, a hopeless chasm between husband and wife—had come menacing our happiness like satyr ghosts stealing out of the dark. I knew from that day that I must protect the home; or see it destroyed; and is not that typical of ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, where girls and women become wage-earners, where they enter the arena called "industry"?

It is not a matter of choice. Therefore cease arguing about it. It is a matter of force. Therefore, let us see that the conditions are made right—that the girl is as well protected outside the home as in it, and that she goes forth equipped with the only weapon that will win the Battle of Life—efficiency, physical and mental. It did not matter in the least whether I was able to earn, able to fight, able to protect. I had to, whether I was able or not. If I was not able, then I must make myself able.

I did not realize then that every member of our family had been born with several very serious handicaps; too many nerves, too little nerve; more brains than brawn, which foreordains tragedy just as soon as the hard test of life's scramble up and down hill begins to shake the flimsy machinery to pieces; and a very pronounced tendency to weak lungs on both sides of the house. Against these handi-

caps should be set three distinct advantages. First, we all had the advantage of that out-door life, of training in realities, that never lie and never cheat. Fools we have been, all of us, many times. Blunders we have made galore, so that I have come to the pass where, though I ask God to forgive my sins because I can't forgive them myself, ten times more I ask Him to wipe out my blunders; for I wouldn't forgive them if I could. And I think we've all been inclined slightly to be soft heads. We have had to learn to be hard, to realize that though diamond and charcoal are composed of the very same thing, it is the diamond that is hard. Training in out-door realities taught us all truth and integrity. I mean the kind of truth so that you realize that you must not lie to yourself. Another advantage was my mother's belief that innocence is no protection unless it is the innocence of knowledge as distinguished from the innocence of ignorance. She did not believe that a boy could know what evils to shun or why, a girl what dangers or why, unless taught what the signs of the evils and dangers were, instead of learning by experience, when it is too late. We all stepped into the arena of life knowing the signs to shun and why.

There was another advantage very hard to

define but we all went out in the world equipped with it. My mother had a peculiar, almost uncanny, Celtic clairvoyant power to project the image of her personality with us all through life. In stress, in turmoil, in joy, in tight places of complicated decision, we have all felt her invisibly beside us, not advising, but shedding a sort of spiritual radiance on life. I am not a spiritualist and know little about spiritualism; but I know that we have all had this consciousness of her influence. It has a peculiarly clarifying, calming effect, when the waters flow below the bridge of life both turbid and tempestuous—this spirit touch of a love that is—I cannot say dead; for I know that the presence is with me as really and tensely to-day as that afternoon when we stood beside the rain pool in the orchard.

I longed to grow up. I grudged the minutes till I could earn. If I could have taken a dagger and stabbed these Phantom Foes menacing out of the dark, I would gladly have died for the privilege of giving the death stroke; but the trouble is *seeing red and going out to kill—doesn't help. It's hustling that helps.*

My mother did not speak. Neither did I as we linked arms and went up the back stairs. At the landing she turned.

"Aren't you going to the festival?"

I shook my head. We entered the room; and I flung my arms about her, but could not utter the question on my lips, any more than she could muster up evasive words to delude childhood back into blind happiness. I laid my head on her shoulder. There were no tears. Though tears have come to my eyes and throat since, from that day to this, I have literally never shed a tear. What I wanted to ask, what I wanted to hurl at the very throne of God, was the question—Is it the common lot of woman to suffer in mute heartbreak? Is suffering an inevitable and necessary part of her lot? Does it do any good, this suffering? What's it for? Why? I have been seeking the answers to those questions all my life, *answers in fact, not argument;* and I should like to borrow the angel Gabriel's trumpet to sound abroad the answer that I've found. It would needs be a golden instrument with the mellow notes of a hunter's horn or the glad shout of disimprisoned waters in spring to voice the answer I have found.

And isn't that typical too, of this whole woman movement? Aren't the women moving uncertainly on untried feet to untried goals—seekers? And aren't the wailers, the parasites, the sisterhoods of discontent weak ones

lost in the dark, shivering at Phantom Fears they will neither fight nor face? That was my first glimmering of the great economic fact, which the world has barely yet sighted that women in industry, the economic independence of women, if you like to put it that way is not the repudiation of womanhood and the functions of womanhood, but is the building of a fortress of security round about womanhood against brutality and force and hunger; is a guarantee of the right of every man child and every woman child to be love-born.

And in a few weeks we had joined the great migration West.

CHAPTER II

ACQUIRING EFFICIENCY FOR THE WORK OF LIFE

When I speak of a woman acquiring efficiency for the work of life, needless to say I do not mean acquiring efficiency for a career. A career is not an aim. It is a result; in fact, the result of doing the everyday work of life well, and acquiring efficiency for it. If one acquires efficiency, the career will take care of itself. If one does not acquire efficiency, all the ambition, all the envy, all the spurts of determination ever brewed in a witch's caldron of wretchedness will not effect a career. It was natural, perhaps, in a great transition period from mural existence to a world arena, that misguided enthusiasts should preach "the career" idea to young girl graduates at commencement exercises; that thoughtless friends out of sheer vanity should spur eager youngsters up to chase a rainbow will-o'-the-wisp, without the slightest regard to natural endowment.

You do not need to pursue a career. If you

acquire the thing called efficiency, the career will pursue you. There is no woman living who, looking back on her school days, cannot recall case after case of the tragedy from following the *ignis fatuus* of a career. In the old days, when it was something of a triumph for a woman "to break into" the man's university, many a girl thought all she had to do was, first pass inside the sacred portals; second pass the men in her studies; third pass the examinations 99 or 100 per cent.; and all life would open before her a golden easy way. Well, she did all these things, hurdled over the portals if they did not open; beat the men out of their boots in studies; captured all the scholarships; but somehow life did not open a golden easy way. Neither did the way seem to lead anywhere. I have heard disappointed women explain the thing this way: "Boys seem to develop more slowly than girls; but then, when they get out in the world, they seem to go ahead faster." The fact ignored in this explanation was that while the girls were cram—cram—cramming themselves with second-hand, diluted book knowledge, the boys, out on the campus taking knocks and kicks from men they might hate, down in the wildest hurly-burly of rowdy rackets, were having bumped and thumped into them hard,

not second-hand, diluted book knowledge, but first-hand facts of life. The boys were failing in their examinations but learning how to play the game of life, and how to have the reptile vices of littleness knocked out of their souls. The girls were capturing prizes but learning no more of the big world arena than their grandmothers, who had never left the four walls of home, had known. They were, some of them, growing a fungus of hopes in studious shades bound to rot in the bitterness of later life. In literature, art, music, the theater, the will-o'-the-wisp vanity of a career has caused even more poignant tragedies. New York, London, Paris, Vienna have literally armies of fake vampire teachers, who batten and fatten on this sad vanity of a career. There are "literary agents" galore, who for the sum of $10 will "fix up" a young writer's manuscript to ensure certain fame and fortune. One such was under arrest by the postal authorities for "a get rich quick" scheme. Another failed to run a basement eating house. A third took off to parts unknown to escape exposure. A fourth once came to me to know if I could raise ten thousand among my friends to furnish offices up in style and advertise because "young authors are so crazy to get their stuff published that if you advertised wide enough and got a

few big names on your list of directors, you could count on a thousand manuscripts a day coming in, which at $10 per and expenses of only a few thousands a year; and so on." I wasn't taken in. Somebody else was. There are dramatic schools in all these cities, that have literally never graduated an actor, or in fact, a thing but "yellow-cutionists" and dividends; and it would take an ambitious student of music—"voice culture," is the word—to tell the inside story of blackmail and bleeding to which many a girl, coming as a stranger to a great city, and ambitious for a career, has been subjected. The attics of London and Paris and Vienna and New York are strewn with such wrecks; girls who have set out with the blessing of parents and the applause of a whole community, who have spent every cent they had and a great deal they hadn't, who have impoverished "the old folks" at home, and then, through no fault of their own but lack of ability, of physical or mental stamina, of nerve or verve, have failed to make good and been ashamed to go back without the tag of a career attached to their names. Sometimes, where the money held out, or the victim had "pull," the press agent has been called in to create the bluff of a career, that did not exist; and with this empty and bitter mask on a sad

face, the victim has turned back. What becomes of those who don't make good and don't turn back only the God who looks down from the stars, through the roofs of the huddled cities, knows. I am quite sure, if the Angel Gabriel had ever been a human being, tears would dim his vision in setting down such records. Of the one who did succeed out of the tens of thousands, who tried and failed, we all hear; but we do not hear of the multitudes of half-way-ups, and the still greater multitudes who never got up at all. Be sure if you sing like a nightingale above a peanut wagon or a hurdy gurdy the world will stop and listen without any misguided friends sticking bayonets in the ticklings of your own vanity. If you write like Shakespeare, or Mr. Dooley, the world will find you out without any big drum to announce you are here. If it's in you, it will break out! Don't hurt yourself whirling dervish dances all round your ego to exorcise the spirit!

And so for a girl setting out in life—or boy, either, for that matter—the word career to me has come to be a sort of marsh light leading into the death swamps. You attend to your job: the career will attend to itself. And here comes in the beautiful inconsistency: though we have preached home as woman's sphere for

a thousand years, what training have we provided for efficiency on the job? "Bah, none of your study fag for me," I recall one acquaintance saying. "All I want is to jabber a little French, bang the piano, dance; and that will do for me." Plus a trip abroad, that is exactly all the training for her job she acquired; and she has been like a huge feather bed, or a millstone, weighted round her husband's neck ever since. A knowledge of arithmetic as far as the multiplication tables, a few polite languages, fancy-work, music, sewing; and the girl of the old order was supposed to be equipped for life. If her men supporters failed her, she could take in lodgers, sew, do house work; perhaps, in a very dainty and ladylike way, teach a few private pupils. These things failing, there remained only the convent or the devil. A man was always carefully trained for his work. A woman was supposed to be born fully equipped for hers. What did she know about the physiology of birth; of pre-natal influences; of diseases that might blind her child; of practical nursing; of the science of things that go into the household's stomach? Nothing! Less than nothing! It was not supposed to be proper to mention these things in a young girl's presence. Her equipment for efficiency was to be kept in a

state of absolute ignorance. What were the results? I shall give two examples of which I personally know. One young wife for reasons purely personal affecting financial affairs was in a state of terrible depression before her first child was born. Her sole hope was that the child would be born dead. He wasn't. He came into the world an erratic genius subject to terrible alternations of do-nothing languid depression and bursts of almost genius in whatever he touched. Toward middle life, when he was at the university, his mother began studying everything affecting the efficiency of her position as a wife and mother. I remember once, looking up from a book, she remarked quite casually as if dreaming back through the years: "I wonder if there is anything in all this theory of prenatal influence coloring a child's disposition?"

"Why?"

"Because if there is and B—— should ever do anything to himself, I'll know it was the way I felt and what I tried to do before he was born."

In his twenty-first year, after a particularly erratic but excellent course in the university, that boy was found in the bath tub with his throat cut from ear to ear. I am not setting down pretty fictions. I am setting down facts.

Was the mother to be blamed? Her husband was a business man. From his fifteenth year, he was trained in efficiency for his job. She was meant and designed by her parents for marriage at the earliest possible moment. She was, in fact, taken by the scruff of the neck and married off willy-nilly when barely eighteen. Her training in efficiency for her work was to be kept in absolute abysmal ignorance of every fact concerning it.

Yet another case: the first words that the little daughter of a friend of mine uttered were —"Won't! Won't! Won't!" That daughter's whole life has been one tempestuous chafing against the line of whatever she was doing. She has been forceful and successful and attractive as the world rates such things beyond words. She has been too sensible ever to be obstinate; but her whole life has been recklessly wilful and tempestuous. Her spirit reminds you of a stormy sea. Before her birth her father was following a headstrong course in opposition to all sense that wrecked forever that family's peace and fortune; and the sins of the parent had descended, not as the curse of an erratic Deity, but purely as cause and effect to the next generation. Were the parents to blame? Had they been trained in efficiency for the job of life?

To-day, though at least ten per cent. of the total population of women in every civilized country have to go out in the industrial arena as wage earners, whether they want to or not, though ninety per cent. remain in the home arena also I trust as wage earners, as plus in the scheme of things, not minus, we haven't improved much on the old order of training in efficiency for the job. We have only awakened to a realization that the old system is not "delivering the goods"; and in a frantic endeavor to improve things, we continue to make endless experiments.

When we first moved West, and I awakened to a realization that I must join the great army of wage-earning women, that I must earn for the home and protect the home and fight for the home (otherwise, there would be no home), that it wasn't a theoretic question of woman's sphere but a practical question of getting bread, I had, like all other wage-earning women of this transition period, vague ideas about acquiring efficiency for the work of life. We hadn't time to acquire efficiency. We were tumbled out of our pigeon holes hit or miss, and had to earn. We knew only a fevered desire to get in harness and work for results. And right here, it seems to me, is the

first foreshadowing of tragedy with woman in the wage-earning arena. It is too often a hit or miss. There is no preparation; or if there is, it is too often a preparation that defeats its own ends. You can sometimes be too near the woods to see the trees. You must go up on the hill tops to get a perspective of life. That is why, though you may not take a friend's advice, a friend in need is a friend, indeed; for detached from the entanglement and pressure of necessity, a friend's views will sometimes give you a new angle on a situation. That is why religion helps in keen stress. It enables you to get out of yourself for a moment, to escape from the prison of your own personality and get a new breath before you go back into the fray; and to this day, when wearied from any fray, my first desire is to get out into the woods, into the wilderness, into the desert, to forget things for a moment so that I can come back with a new mind. I believe people of religious temperaments express this by saying that they go into retreat.

I had no such friend in whom I could confide at that time. I was too insanely proud to confess how desperately poor we were. The funny thing was that nine people out of ten, who migrated West before the Panic of '93, were just as poor, and all too insanely proud

to confess it. It was a sort of secret between them and God. I know society men, who kept a front to the world on less than $40 a month; and lawyers' wives who kept servants for the appearance of things on $65 a month; and big legal firms that were not earning enough to pay office rent. We went into the North-West a few years preceding the Panic of '93 with forty dollars a month to sustain a family of five. Don't ask how we did it! We didn't do it. Our mother did it; and did it so well we never knew she was accomplishing the biggest feat of all modern economics, making ends meet that wouldn't, as thousands and tens of thousands of nameless mothers are doing today all over the world—the silent tireless warriors of the piping times of peace that have no annals. We pension a soldier who loses a leg in battle against a man-foe. What do we pension a mother, who wears out her eyesight mending half the night, keeping the Wolf from the door, fighting off that elemental foe of the race—Hunger-Fright?

Though I had no friend, whose advice might have steered me past a Danger Zone at that time (don't smile; I mean it, every word), I made a tremendous confidant of God. I used to hum myself to sleep with sort of extemporized prayers or chants in which I told Him

all about it, this in a house so badly built and in such a terrific climate that you had to put your head under the bed clothes to keep from freezing, and you could sweep a dust pan of hoar frost from the windows in the morning. The whole city had grown up like a mushroom, on foundations of chips; and the houses were all alike, shells. I used to read the Bible backward and forward, and inside out and back again. I wanted facts I could anchor to everlastingly and never get fooled. Once, I remember, in a fury at some bungle in plans, in a determination to found my life on horse-sense instead of mushy platitudes, I attacked the Book of Proverbs and committed it to memory from A to Z in about three days. The trouble was though I wrote the precepts "on the tablets" of my heart—as Solomon, wise old man, commends in his cynical epigrams of everlasting truth—those same precepts were not always in the palms of my hands when I began to handle the cards that Fate shuffled out. I knew the wisdom theoretically all right, but somehow I didn't always get it applied till afterward. We can all learn old Solomon off by memory. We have to get it in bumps before we know it. Anyway, I had a profound, unshakable, absolutely undoubting faith that, if God backed me, I

couldn't be bucked; that if I played the game according to His Rules, no matter what the odds, I'd win out; that, no matter how frail I was physically, He could make perfect His strength in my weakness. I was as certain of these beliefs as I was of being alive. I did not read the Bible for the sake of "being good." I read it with fevered anxiety for facts to steer by. At the time I was reading the Bible in this fever, I was adjudged riotous in the day schools and anathema in the Sunday School. I could not stand the tabby-cat program, the platitudes handed out for truths, which every one of us knew were lies and would not hold water in daily life for one minute.

And now the question comes, fearfully from the believing, in smiling cynicism from the unbelieving, having this Faith which was guaranteed to remove mountains, did it justify itself? I am not going to set down what you want or expect me to set down. I am not going to set down what I wanted or expected myself at that time. I am going to set down the exact facts; for at the present stage in the contest of belief and unbelief—I take it that an ounce of fact is worth several tons of theology. If you ask—with this faith, did I get what I wanted?—I answer frankly that

I did not. I didn't find faith a wizard wand "to touch" God for any fool desire. Faith isn't an electric office bell to use God for our beck and call as an office boy. It's an electric bell all right; but it is He, who touches it; and we, who jump. We can disregard the call if we like. That is our loss; not His. We don't get the pay check—that is all. Somebody else, who answers the bell, gets it. *We can't break moral laws*—get that into your head hard! *We can't break the laws. They break us.* If you ask again—did that faith of the little child pan out? I answer in the words of the first great English scientist, Bacon—you can only command nature by obeying her; you can only get results out of faith by hitching your plans to a star; by obeying the rules of the game, not expecting the Umpire to bend the rules to you. If you'll excuse the Western colloquialism in which we all talked at that time and which always seemed to me to smack more of truth and life than the canned and stilted phrases of the wordmongers—It's a long shot more important for you to observe the Rules of the Game, than for the rules to observe you.

If somebody had made me understand at the time that we have not only to pray for Strength but to Fight for it, and that it is the

Struggle of the Fight that makes us strong; that when adversity comes, it isn't the Will of God to fry us, or gruel us, or something, but is simply a boisterous storm wind blowing the rotten leaves off our branches, blowing the punk and the cobwebs out of our souls, shaking us free of everything that doesn't matter—if I could have realized this, it would have saved a lot of growing pains in the soul.

Entering the North-West by the first train that crossed the Upper Mississippi, we found ourselves in the curious medley of a collapsed boom town. The men of the family scattered to ranch and homestead, homesteads, which, by the way, they had abandoned before the great Panic had passed. My mother remained in the city to educate us, with the income already specified. Not the income, but the process of education, was the Danger Zone. There was not a single private school, except convents for Indian children, West of Lake Superior at that time; and my mother had by this time come to the point where knowing that we would have to go out into life, she wanted us to begin to learn life by going to the public school. Every child in the city (above convent grades) was going to the public school. The training in the rough and tumble of life was good, especially as we were all old enough to

know the evils to shun; but whether with younger children in congested Eastern cities, where finely nurtured youngsters sit side by side with diseased children of European slums, the same training in rough and tumble would be good I am not prepared to say. In fact, where the numbers are great and the elements highly alien, I am frankly frightened of the whole mill-process of modern education. I don't think you can put the human soul in big job lots through an automatic mental sausage factory, and have a high average come out. You'll have an average all right, and a uniform product; but where the numbers are great and the elements alien, you will have an average down to the mediocre, not up to the brilliant.

The Danger Zone to us was not in big numbers and alien elements. It was the mill process of education that had just begun at that time. In an effort to make collegiate education serve the purpose of entrance to second year university and first year medicine, subject was piled on subject in a mental pyramid that threatened to topple from topheaviness. We were dosed with Latin and Greek and German and French and English grammar, and statistics and hydrostatics and mensuration, and algebra and Euclid, and physics and

chemistry and botany, and physiology and physical geography, and Roman and Grecian and English and American history, and English and American literature and English composition and two or three courses of psychology, in all twenty-six pass subjects, the very perfection of the mill process in education, which proceeds on the assumption of quantity, not quality; of grind, not growth; of sponge-like absorption, not development. No mind under the sun, much less a child's, could master all these subjects. Only half-baked educators would have attempted such a crazy curriculum. We were loaded with home work like beasts of burden. In such a cram, lessons became a process of hearing, not of teaching; and education a process of cram for a pass, not mastery of a subject. Examination time became a sort of horror ahead. In the June heat of midsummer we wrote as many as forty pages of foolscap each half day for two weeks. What was the result? We slurred the subjects we didn't like and crammed a pass and acquired habits of slovenly thought. We knew the thing to be an impossibility, that not a teacher on the staff could have passed the whole twenty-six subjects; and when students went to examination with whole pages of Cicero translated inside their shirt sleeves, we didn't think

it much crime, and didn't tell, especially as many of the sinners were grown men come in from the farm with only money enough for two meals a day trying to get "a pass" into medicine or theology. Don't smile! The theologs were the worst cheats of all. They pretended they didn't. The meds. never did that. They cribbed openly, gloriously, unblushingly. We "kids," as they called us juniors, used to pass slips to them by the mile through the slats at the backs of the desk—remember these were grown men of twenty-five and twenty-eight, living on one and two meals a day trying to get a "hurry-up" pass. I wanted a "hurry-up" pass, too. I knew what it felt like. I wanted desperately to earn at the earliest possible moment; but as I still hummed those prayers under the bed clothes at night, I didn't cheat. I was trying to play according to the rules of the game. Besides, I was an excellent cram, a prize sponge. I could memorize things as easily as I read and without an effort. That, probably, came from a long line of university forebears. I could take my 99 per cent. on the subjects I liked, and get through by the skin of my teeth at 37 per cent. on the subjects I disliked. My health had become so uncertain at this stage that I usually missed the spring and fall terms from colds that settled

on my lungs and simply paralyzed me; so that I took three prizes in literature at this time without knowing that I had tried for them or that they had been offered. Any prize that I ever designedly tried for, I missed. Those I didn't want, came to me. Such a jade is Fate! So little should we care whether she smiles or frowns. So securely should we sit on the throne of happiness inside our own souls! I had finished collegiate work a year before I could enter the university or receive a diploma.

And now for definite facts as to that Danger Zone! I wish I could blazon them in fire across the face of the sky! Understand distinctly, our teachers were hale good fellows. Some of them are my best friends to this day. I never had a woman teacher; and therefore am no judge of the condemnation of the so-called feminine influence on youth at adolescence. What I am going to say is no condemnation of these teachers. They were victims as we were, of a mill process. Some of them have passed on to medicine and law and wealth and fame; but the man, who did us all most good, who implanted the love of poetry and beauty in us, who taught us to be thorough and prompt and on the nail, was a dreamer and will never know wealth.

Look at that list of subjects! Which sub-

ject added one jot, one tittle, one iota, of efficiency for the job of life? You can count the subjects that helped in efficiency on the fingers of one hand. The rest were punk, rotten lumber in the waste spaces of brain room.

Meantime, they sapped us of our youth; they sapped us of our strength; they sapped us of nights that ought to have been spent in rest and sheer glee. Fitness for living consists of more than bookish cram. It consists in knowledge of life. Which of the subjects gave us knowledge of life? Let me set down some facts about that class.

A poor Norwegian, who had come in from the country and literally walked through every curriculum, died of brain fever just as he finished.

The two men who gave promise of being the most brilliant medical men died their first year as hospital interns after graduation. They had no strength for the risks of the diseases to which they were exposed.

The man, who was our star classic and football player, is to-day a hopeless drunkard. He went from college so depleted of reserve strength that he could never work under stress without a stimulant.

Our prize theological student went insane in his twenty-eighth year.

The man, who went from us to the big Eastern university and there won the scholarship that sent him abroad, contracted tuberculosis and died just as he took his doctor's degree in his twenty-fourth year.

The woman, who went from us to a gold medal career in the East and from the East to Germany, I did not meet till fourteen years afterward when she was married and had a family. Her face struck me as sad and dissatisfied with life, though I knew that she loved devotedly both her husband and her children. Later, she told me that the strain of those early days had given her such sleepless habits that she had been compelled to use a light drug. The drug had so completely destroyed the power of carrying consecutive thoughts in her mind that she could no longer read a verse of poetry or a page of history and know what it meant. She could not carry the thought of one line forward to another.

Those happen to be the cases that I personally and intimately knew out of a class of, say, a hundred, of whom a dozen were girls. For myself, it was then that I began the undermining that brought a smash of lungs at twenty and that left habits of restless wakefulness till four in the morning—habits that took me till I was twenty-six to overcome.

The mill system put a premium on stolid stupidity. It wore the willing ones out and left the skulkers with fresh zest for life. That is why I sometimes think stupidity is more criminal than sin.

But that is not the worst indictment of the Danger Zone. The habits you form from twelve to twenty you form for life. What habits were we forming? Habits of rush, crush, cram, instead of thorough mastery.

But especially regarding women! The fact that a woman gives of her strength potentially and really to the creation of a new race does not necessarily imply that she is constitutionally weakened thereby. Health statistics prove the opposite. Except in the actual creation of a new race, life insurance figures show that her chances are greater for long life than a man's. But here is the point in the Danger Zone to the girl during this crush, rush, cram period! Her brother goes camping by way of holidays, goes tramping, goes shooting, goes to the woods, kicks a football, plays baseball, spends four or six hours a day outside and two or three weeks a year in the wilds. How many hours a day does the average girl spend outside? I leave the question unanswered. Is it any wonder she comes to her twenties with nerves; he, to his twenties, with nerve? She

comes to the job of life peeved. He comes to the job of life powerful. She is languid. He is alert. We blame sex for it all. Has sex anything to do with it at all? Isn't it another by-product of our fool-mill-system? That is my great indictment of the Danger Zone for the girl, who is to acquire efficiency for the job of life.

There were compensations, however, in the raw crude new West to which we had come, in spite of half-baked educational theories, that loaded us like beasts of burden, with work when we should have played. There were compensations even in the general hard-upness. We were all alike poor. It was not a man-less world. There were ten men to one woman. I can imagine nothing worse for a girl than the ashen gray, ever narrowing feminine existence of a world, where there are no men to jolt her out of herself—such an existence, for instance, as that of certain operatives and office hands in Europe, when the sexes are—I believe the word is—"segregated"; as though God Almighty made a mistake in making both men and women; and where as many as a thousand girls work year in and year out without exchanging a word with any man but father or brother. An English girl actually told me that

she had worked as copyist in an insurance office for fifteen years without meeting a man in her work. And I can imagine nothing worse for boys than a gruff bass-voiced world where no women come. The unknown world will always be peopled with imagination, fancy figures, which may be good or ill, wise or foolish. (Some of the Saints have had a bad time of it, you know!) The best cure for a girl, crazy for men's attention, is to give her such a surfeit of it that the novelty wears off and she acquires some discrimination, some power of choice and rejection, we'll say; and that, every girl in the West could have had at that period, unless she were such a fool that she reversed the process, when the man—wise fellow—exercised the power of discrimination and rejection. I have known of women who have heard of this feature of Western life, and come out from Europe hungry-eyed and yet gone back without any fool gudgeon on their string. Why? Because the West does not go in for lassoing anything but cattle; frankly, that is the only why I can answer. A man knows that a woman, who has to pursue men for either attention or a husband, has something so undesirable about her that men have not pursued her. The woman, who has a grouch at life because she is single, would have two grouches at life if

she were double: she wears the sign of her own damnation on her forehead.

Then, life on the frontier West at that time had many features resembling life on the open meadows. There was no index expurgatorius. You saw things as they were; not glozed. It was a land, where people came without a past. That loosening of all ties to the handicap of a past has a curious effect on different natures. To the handicapped nature set suddenly free, it was the giving of wings for a future. To the base nature set free from the restraint of old home surroundings, it was like the sinking of a stone to the bottom of a cesspool. Men and women found the level of their intrinsic worth; and found it with terrible swiftness. The precipices of life in a raw crude new land are unfenced and unconcealed. You know where to shun them; or where to go over, if you are anxiously looking for a place to break your neck; but I don't think you confuse values as you do in an older land. Vice seems to walk uncloaked and brazen in a new country. Smug respectability hasn't yet wrapped whited garments round sin; and the thing that you see isn't pleasant to contemplate. It has an ugly face that you shun; and I do not think there is the same danger to youth as in older communi-

ties where the same thing is concealed. When I say that Broadway in its widest open, unlidded days could show nothing worse than two areas of that new boom city, and that the first society of the place was notorious on two continents for its swift pace you will know what I mean. In fact, we threw out of the city by the scruff of the neck at that time a French count by name famous or infamous in his marriage with one of America's millionaire daughters. There was a funny story connected with it. This French count, a cousin of the one who married into a railroad magnate's family, and a coterie of the same type had come out with the avowed aim of painting the West red with a new style of farming. They succeeded in their aim, and if one judges by results, most of their ranching must have been done with champagne. At first, the best homes in the city had been thrown open to the newcomers; but we had too many of that kind coming to the country not to recognize bounders and soldiers of fortune. In a few months the French clique had been ostracized and had departed for parts unknown, namely Newport and New York, leaving mournful creditors behind in the West. When the press agents began with a flare of publicity on the international marriage, [what they had failed to accomplish in the

West, they had pulled off successfully in New York and Newport], an enterprising banker bought up the bad debts and departed for the East to collect. He stationed himself at the church door to catch the happy bridal party as they emerged. What was his disgust to see that though it was the same name and the same family, it was the wrong count. The real culprit was in the wedding procession, but he had not married the millions. The banker went home fourteen thousand dollars poorer. We saw all these things as youngsters, and knew what they meant. Perhaps it was part of the training to take life without blinking, and know things as they are.

Vaguely I had had in mind during my school course, I suppose because university blood was in my veins ("by unseen hands are we bent and tortured most"), that I would hurry through all the education the West could give me; then by some magic wand, which God would wave (I have never found Him wave any wands at all but rather does He play an absolutely square game above board according to rules), by some magic would I get money enough to go off for a course in Europe to qualify for one of the professorships, which universities were then beginning to give women. Meantime, I was a year ahead of

things, a year too young to get the diploma of admittance to college.

If I had dreamed there was any way by which a woman could have earned her living out of doors, I never would have thought for a moment of teaching; but those were the days when half-baked educationalists superciliously referred to manual labor as off-caste and farmers as "clodhoppers." The lines of caste drawn between the different vocations that a woman could choose were harder and faster than the ancient fooleries of the East. Civil Service put you among the elect. Nursing was desirable and never hurt you socially. Office work, if it were a well known office, came about third. Teaching ranked about midway between brains and hands.

Joyfully jokeful—wasn't it?—when you look back on the various little step-ladders by which Western women who kicked the Chinese boots off their heads and their heels climbed timidly and fearfully up and out of cellars of despond to new big upper arenas of opportunity and freedom and service! At the bottom rung of the ladder, there was trampling of cruel little feet on the hands of those coming up below; but at the top of the ladder out on the big new arena of opportunity and freedom and service—will the same lines of caste re-

main drawn fast and hard? I think not. I think I see them rubbing out every day. The new service, the new freedom, the vista of opportunities that have no bounding horizon are bringing about a curious new valuation of vocations. The women, who can produce things that stand for plus, whether babies or books, pictures or potatoes, happiness or hats, can command their own price in cash and joy in this world. This does not mean that there will not always be distinctions, the ups, the half-way-ups, the downs, the no-goods, the pretenders, the fit, the unfit and the feckless; but it does mean that the new day of women in a world arena has compelled new valuation. For instance, I know of women, they called themselves "gentle" women, I trust they were, though I never found much gentleness in their judgments of other women, who pulled political wires and studied for civil service examination, and almost broke their necks to get what they called "a government position," where the beginners' salary never exceeded thirty-six dollars a month, and the highest salary could never possibly be more than seventy-five dollars. They would have scorned, I hope the day will come when women will never blister their tongues with scorn, and execrated the very thought of what they called "a shop girl's

existence.'' Yet, in that pioneer city, youngsters went into shops with hair in pigtails tied in a shoe string—went in at wages far below the much vaunted ''minimum wage,'' studied and fought and worked their way doggedly up till they became foreign buyers for big firms at salaries of from $5,000 to $7,000 a year, with two trips to Europe and all expenses paid.

There has been a transmutation of values in spite of the lines of caste; and the woman still sitting inside the line of caste is the one with a curious vinegar wonder as to what life is about. We may like it, or loathe it. The transition is here; and the transmutation of values is here; and perhaps, some of us dream of a day when those in the new arena of service and freedom and opportunity will stand shoulder to shoulder, an army of workers, with their faces to the light, and march shoulder to shoulder to whatever dawn destiny may unroll.

It was while turning over in my mind what to do that a letter came from a former senior classmate. That is the way life always is. We are turning over in our minds what we *will* to do; and life gives us a little push on the shoulder, or winks at us, or blinks at us, or beckons through an open door to nowhere; and in we sprawl, hit or miss, glad or sad, willy-nilly,

pursued by only one shunless shadow, our own personality, as blind to the future as a newborn baby.

The friend was teaching a little country school at the very Back of Beyond, ten miles inside the outermost post of settlement. She was ill. I was under age, and could not get a diploma; but by a fluke of the law, a substitute was permitted special arrangements. Would I substitute and finish her term from August 2nd to December 23rd? Would I? The salary was fifty-five dollars a month. I didn't walk to get the permit from the authorities. My feet were winged. If this were Fate beckoning, I chased her; and she seemed rosy hued as the wonderful prairie sunsets that set the whole sky in a riot of wine and fire.

As I walked down the street to leave early on August the 1st—there were no street cars yet—I turned. My mother stood in the door, shading her eyes from the sunrise. I waved. She only lifted her other hand, and let it fall. I had a horrible suspicion that she was hiding tears. "You were so young," she afterward told me, "that I went upstairs and prayed for your safety! There was only one thing I was thankful for—it wasn't a big city where you were going."

But of the millions of young girls, who do go to the big city, who must go to the big city or starve; whose prayers fend off the harpies and the hells? God feedeth the young ravens; but when these ask for bread, do they get a stone; for meat, and get a serpent? I never hear the vague prayers of a Sunday morning service ascend to the dome of a church roof in a big city, God forbid such vague and tenuous askings should ever pass a roof, but I think of the attic dwellers, and the tenement dwellers, and the back-hall-room dwellers, youth imprisoned in the city flat, feet enmeshed in an economic net, whose beings wither for lack of the spiritual sunlight and joy, which these praying churches ought to be feeding out to them.

At the station was a school friend with a bunch of sweet peas, quite as big as a tub—I have some of them yet pressed in those old Proverbs, that I tried to use for my pilot chart. She was a little girl, all dimples and violet eyes with a baby's wonder that life could require anything of her, that life could be cruel. She was the only one of the class who had not to turn out and work. We all adored her, but it was the kind of love you have for a child you must protect. She played the violin and

the piano wonderfully, let all the music of her shrinking soul out at her finger tips; but she had been trained with the words *"I can't"* upon her lips. She had been diligently, conscientiously, persistently trained to the belief by a weak mother that because she was a girl life would require nothing of her; that being a girl was a physical disability under which she must sit down hopelessly; and "the wind would be tempered to the shorn lamb"; but that is just the point—the wind isn't. *It is when the lamb is shorn that you can bet on the wind cavorting itself like seven devils.* Within a short time, the Panic was upon us like a hurricane, and every vestige of her father's fortune was smashed in a wrecked bank. Utterly unqualified to confront Life, after ten years of struggling, she did the only thing that a woman untrained for Life can do, she took her defeat; and quietly died. Yet she was the favored one of our class that year; and sent me out on the trail of Life happy because I knew the fragrance of the great bunch of flowers typified the love of friends following me.

Next to the message of the stars and the seas and the great wide spaces of unfenced nature; next to the glimpses of transfiguration that come to us in great human love and

sorrow, I think that flower fragrance one of the best influences to keep our natures from brutalizing under the blows of necessity, from turning ashen gray in the fires that burn out our dross.

CHAPTER III

ONLY A TEACHER

Beautiful Plains they called the place, where I had gone to finish the term of my school friend; and beautiful, the memory will always remain with me, though the district lay at what was at that time the very Back of Beyond; exactly ten miles inside the very outermost posts of frontier settlement, where the checker-board farms staked in with one strand of barb wire merged into the fenceless prairie. Settlers' shanties unpainted and raw, and for the most part consisting of only one or two rooms stood like the hub of a wheel in the center of a prairie bounded by the unbroken circle of the sky-line. If you could see the smoke of a neighbor's chimney, or rather of the neighbor's stovepipe sticking up through the slant shanty roof, like the funnel of a ship at sea you were regarded as fortunate, being in such a thickly populated settlement.

Consider the influence of such isolation in forcing people to be independent and self-de-

pendent and self-sufficient and resourceful! I sometimes think that influence was a prime factor in the buoyant stick-at-nothing forceful Spirit of the West! No use wailing! Nobody ever heard wails. You might drown yourself in a slough with tears of self-pity. There was nobody there to witness the drowning; and if you had any rebound in your make-up, you presently dried the tears and set yourself to making the best of things. It wasn't a world for weaklings. The misfits and the unfits and the wailers fell and perished by the way; or else circumstances forced them to become fit, a sort of enforced conversion, rebirth and regeneration, though not catalogued in religious experiences.

It was twenty miles to a doctor, twenty miles to a railway, seven to a church, over a horizon that rolled level as the sea, where the settlers' tented wagon came up over the offing like a sail. Indians with otter skins tied to the ends of their long braids went loping past the barbed wire fences, which they hated, to join the buffalo hunters on the plains to the North; and in the autumn long lines of ox carts, built without a nail or a steel rim, went creaking over the winding trails followed by cayuse ponies and mongrel packs of dogs, fat squaws asquat on buffalo robes and pemmican sacks in

the carts, papooses in moss bags dangling from saddle pommels, gypsy urchins with long hair streaming, racing the ponies round the carts. On the sloughs that lay in the trough of the rolling prairie ducks and wild geese flackered in flocks you could not count. Pioneers have always been accused of being great yarn spinners; but the wildest yarn could not exaggerate the abundance of game on the prairie in those years. I have seen the prairie chickens so tame that the young would not rise out of your way, as they crossed your trail. If you knew where to look in the early mornings, you could see whole flocks of these ridiculously pompous little birds engaged in their morning spree or dance. Man seems to do his skylarking at night. The prairie chickens hold their society functions by dawn. I do not think they are sex-dances as some so-called moralists regard all dances; for these little feathered dandies will puff out their wattles like a full blown orange, and fan their vain little tails, and wave their neck ruffs, and prance and dance and strut and fight sham battles and two-step and waltz and bow and bob—for all the world like any fool-humans, just as readily when ladies are not present as when they are. Occasionally, as you came down into a ravine, you would see a coyote skulk off looking back over

his wolf tail at you; and at nightfall, if you sat very still, you would see the young fawns steal shyly out of the poplar thicket with their black glassy eyes alert, sniffing right and left as they ran for the water pool on little feet that did not seem to touch earth at all.

It wasn't a world where you talked freedom and spouted art and quoted poetry. It was a crude, rude, raw, new world, where you lived and moved and had your being in all three, without knowing it; and I never saw the wind billowing over the waist-high boundless fields of wheat as shining a gold as a setting sun, touching the heavy headed grain with invisible feet, but I waited half expectant for some filmy spirit form to take shape, the tutelary Goddess of the West, beckoning us to a wonderful destiny. When you set out in the morning for the long walk over the prairie, the cobwebs and dew lay on the grass in jewels; and the ozone of the washed air went to your head like fine clarified wine. I did not know it till long afterwards when I sat down in the Tate Gallery, London, to study out the wizardry of Turner's pictures in light and color and tone; but it was really a case of atmospheric stimulant, a sort of spirit intoxication with the zest of life. The ozone bit into your lethargic blood and muscles and lungs. Life pulsed at the leap. You

wanted to breathe deep, to walk hard, to run, to sing with the tingling joy of being alive; of being alive every atom of you. If light be some finest force permeating ether, who can say that on those plains, which are oceans of intensest clearest light, some subtle new force does not enter blood and brain? Of course, eyes blinded with tears, tears of pity for self, will not see the clearest light; and there were a good many people in the West at that time, who hung such veils between themselves and the gladness of life around them.

The days at that Back of Beyond are among my happiest memories; so happy that I can never understand the disappointment, the disillusionment, the bitterness of the man or woman of middle life, who can refer to self as "only a teacher." Wouldn't the woman, who calls herself "only a teacher" call herself "only a this", or "a that" in any vocation under the sun? Isn't she, as a matter of fact, confessing herself a this or a that kind of person? If she wants to make her life stand for plus, to add to the sum total of social service, to stand for something besides a ministering to her own infinitesimally small ego; if she realizes there is only one road to happiness and that is a royal one defined by the royal motto of "I serve," what better scope than in many

of these dull God-forsaken settlements, where she teaches kiddies the game of life by playing them up to a sturdy manhood and staunch womanhood? When I think about some of those boy and girl teachers out on the frontier, "bach'ing" it many of them in 10 by 12 shanties, riding to and from school on easy loping bronchos, earning a little but saving some, and living much; and when I think of the career-chasers of the city attics, the phantom followers of a futile ambition living on a crust for the sake of a future, which they can never realize, I know which of the two I consider to be drinking the wine of life; and which the lees.

I was barely sixteen, and wore short skirts, and a braid down my back; but I felt a great deal older than the most women of forty will acknowledge. I did not know until afterwards that my friend and her predecessor had both been "run out" of this school, which consisted of about six little girls under ten years of age, and twenty rough and tumble husky boys ranging from twelve to nineteen; and I confess my sympathies were all with the boys. It was pretty trying on those sturdy frontier folk, who daily bucked the hardships of life, to have such anæmic tallow city snips as we were sent

out to teach half-grown fellows. When I came up to the school-house, they were all sitting round the pump digging their bare toes in and out of the clay. Such a kill-joy, blank-of-zip bunch of faces I had never seen. Because there didn't seem anything else to do I shook hands all round; and, because that seemed an unexpected performance, the biggest boys grinned. Then, we all went inside. I set the younger ones buzzing over work like bumble bees; then, quite contrary to all rules of propriety, sat down on the front desk and quietly studied the faces. I didn't tell them that I would be their friend, and that I would expect them to be my friends, and that we would all start fresh; and such mush. If you want to bluff, try it on grown-ups, who have deceived so often themselves that they are easily deceived; but don't try it on youngsters, who have the unthinking instincts of the animal or the ant, and size you before you utter a word.

"You fellows are so much older than I expected that most of you will not be at school more than two or three terms," I began. "Suppose you tell me exactly what you are weakest in, what you need most, how long you will be here, then we'll put our hardest licks on what you need most in the shortest time possible. I don't want a chump in this school.

If any fellow is going to make a nuisance of himself, I want him to get out before he begins; or I'll ask the others to throw him out. I'll help you right up to the hilt; but I want every boy here to make things hum. You can have all the fun you like. We're going to have the bestest good time that ever happened till Christmas; but we don't want any fools. Now, come on and let us plan out how we can pack in the most in the shortest possible time."

A funny look of coming alive had risen slowly to those boys' faces like an edge of light coming on a shadow in dark water; and they each told me perfectly frankly what their special difficulties were and how short a time they could spare to school. In an hour we had our groups arranged for "speeding up, team work, stepping together," as they described it; and I deliberately went out to take a look at grounds and surroundings, in order to leave them alone, to make them feel they were running that establishment and that I wasn't. I don't think the word "honor" was ever mentioned in that school. I wanted them to live honor, not palaver about it; and I am quite sure if any boy had misbehaved, the big fellows would have broken his head and thrown him out of the window.

It wasn't a pleasant surprise that I found on the walls of the school porch. Is there any place in life outside the sacred precincts of home where the satyr faces will not leer from the dark if you let them; lust, the wolf, with the lips drawn back showing fangs, familiar but sinister, snarling a menace unless you strike? Where do such rhymes come from? What code of the underworld passes them on to the very Back of Beyond? I noticed there was not a sign of the playground ever being used. That fact and the rhymes on the wall of the school porch told me a lot. These boys were getting a wrong slant because there was nobody to give them a right slant. They were wallowing in mud puddles, because nobody had taught them it is much better fun to flounder in clean pools of thought. Weeds were coming up solely because nobody had ever taken the trouble to see that good seeds were planted.

Our mother had never warned us against evil deeds. She had warned us against evil thoughts. If we took care of our thoughts and let nothing pollute them, she had always said, our words and deeds would take care of themselves, and old Solomon, my pilot chart, because of his manifold and variegated personal experiences ought to know; he had been great on "keeping the heart with all diligence."

You can treat what is unclean in three ways. You can quarantine it and let it fester. That is the polite conventional way: shut the lid down; keep the door tight on bad odor; never mention the presence except in a whisper. Or you can use a surgeon's knife on the fester, and potash and soft soap and a scrubbing brush all round. That is the moral reform way, and very effective till the next leprous case comes along. Or you can make a specialty of keen, clean, crystal morning air, sunshine and zest, light and laughter, on the principle of prevention being the best cure. Satyr shadows don't thrive in clean clear-cut sunshine. Innuendo is their language; a leer, their laugh; and half lights, their stage. Looking over the heads of these raw big husky boys from the door of the defiled porch, I decided I'd try sunshine and zest as the best disinfectants of that situation.

"Do you boys never by any chance play games in this school?" I asked the group standing round the pump at morning recess.

A boy of fourteen with stringy hair sticking up through a roofless straw hat, with ugly freckles, and bare feet poking out of a man's over long duck pants, answered: "Nunk! We never do an'thing in this here school. There

ain't no games, nobody here knows how t' play; and there ain't nobody t' learn us how."

I was barely sixteen; and it is to the everlasting credit of male chivalry that those boys did not burst on the spot; for what I answered in all seriousness was this: "Good gracious, when I was young, we used to play cricket and baseball and stone on the rock and lacrosse and football and knife. Can't any of you make or raise a bat? Haven't any of you a good hard ball at home?"

Two of the boys said they would carve out a couple of basswood bats that very night, and another boy said he would bring a ball; but they wanted to know who would teach them.

"You come an hour early to-morrow morning and I'll show you who will teach you," I promised.

You could have heard a pin fall in that school for the rest of the day. They stole shy looks from their books as if I had been a new specimen escaped from some zoo. I was. I had escaped from those open meadows of the long ago. If I had not had the training of nature in the open, which never blinks a fact, I would not have known how to deal with the situation. Like many an inexperienced and ignorant youngster plunged suddenly and vio-

lently into life, sunshine and shadow and satyr faces in the shadow, I might not have had the knowledge to discern between a leer and a laugh, between lust and love, between wit and smut.

As I said good-night going home that night, a thought struck me. I called back two of the biggest boys, who were, I know now, the culprits.

"Say, you fellows, before I teach you the games to-morrow, give and take, you know, I want you to do something. I want you big boys to come before these little girls arrive. Bring soap and rags, and wash every one of these rotten dirty rhymes off the porch! Then, if anybody ever writes such things on this school again, I am going to turn you big fellows loose on him; and you can thrash him till he can't sit for a week."

They did not answer except a very red-faced "good-night"; but when I came in the morning to give them their first lesson in cricket, you could not have found a chalk or pencil mark on that school the size of a pin. That night I could not sleep for the horror of those rhymes, and what they implied of the menace to life; so I reached over to the bunch of sweet peas and tackled old Solomon, who admonished to keep

the "heart with all diligence; for out of it proceeded the issues of life."

We drove in wickets for cricket, and laid out the diamond for baseball; and later, when the snow came, found somewhere in the district an old football. I did not demonstrate the how, but I taught them the rules of the game, and I trust the rules of a much bigger game, which they would play later in life. Then I left them to manage their sports, themselves, with just one proviso, that they play fair and square and above board always, and if there were any dispute, they would abide by the vote of majority rule. I think those boys henceforth counted the minutes to every recess and noon-hour; and it was an understood thing—no work, no play. Always heretofore, the government allowance to that school had dropped after November 1st owing to the drop in attendance of younger children. We got together one noon hour and discussed why it would not be possible for the big fellows to knock up jumper sleighs and in a regular circuit drive the little ones to and from school. The boys who hadn't sleighs volunteered to build a stable; and they built that stable of sod and thatch roof without one word of suggestion from me; so that the attendance and the government allowance did not drop off for the whole term.

We were all too poor for a Christmas tree to close the session; but everybody brought sugar, and we finished off with a taffy pull that was the nearest approach to a sugaring off in the maple woods that the West could know. One boy, who had just come to the frontier from the slums of an Eastern city, I remember, grabbed the whole of the first panful of taffy and ran without a smile, gorging himself hoggishly.

"He don't know no better," declared one of the big fellows, watching reflectively. "You see he ain't played with our boys, and he can't know."

I trust you catch the fine point in that remark. It was the play that had taught our boys the rules of the game, to be fair and square and above board. They let him have that panful because he so very plainly had never had anything like it before. Then, they fell on him and telescoped him through a snow drift.

Only once were the rules of the game ever violated, only once did we come to the edge of what might have been both disagreeable and tragic. It was out in the stable. One boy of 19 or thereabouts said something he shouldn't —they never told me what; and a youngster of

14 ran and stabbed at him with a pitchfork. The big boys sprang between. Then, when it was all quieted down, they came and told me what they thought I ought to know. I said: "Send those boys in"; and I called school. They all came shuffling in very silent and horribly ashamed that such a thing could have come at the end of the happiest term that district had ever known. There was the kind of silence that makes you tingle, not from physical fear, but from spiritual apprehension that some ideal you treasure is going to crumble into sawdust or clay; that the beautiful is going to fall from its pedestal into some gutter of ugly meanness.

"I don't want to know what you quarreled about," and I am sorry to say my voice trembled, not from fear, but disappointment. "I don't know, and I'd despise you if you were such mean tattletales as to come telling. One was to blame more than the other, of course; but you are both to blame. You have let something happen that has hurt the spirit of the school, that has hurt every one of us, that makes things different so we can't trust one another. If we are willing to let by-gones be by-gones, to forget, to wash the slate clean, you should be willing. If you are manly enough to cut this all out and never to men-

tion it again even in your thoughts, if you are black ashamed of what you have done, get up and shake hands before this class; and never mention it again; and we'll never mention it again." Not a youngster looked up to see. There were audible snuffles from the boy with a handkerchief; and the big fellow's tears were slopping down both cheeks, but he had no handkerchief. If those two boys had been racing for a silver cup, they could not have got out of their seats quicker to reach the front, where it was a contest who would extend his hand foremost. So the tempest blew over; and I think we were all proud of those two boys in a way that must have stiffened their backbones.

Once long after, when I was back in the grind of city work, one of my predecessors, not my school friend but another, asked me a question that I have never been able to answer because I have never been able to understand the terms in which the question was put and I have never been able to put the answer in terms that the questioner would understand.

"But tell me," she said, "when those boys were so much your own age and older, how did you keep them from getting on sort of familiar terms with you? I don't see how you kept those biggest boys from proposing to you."

I simply could not answer that question. It was such a revelation of a wrong attitude to life in the world arena. A woman, who flaunts sex in the world arena, may begin as a fool: she will end as a tragedy. I was thinking of my mother's careful training; sex is a red light that draws the danger that it dreads; womanhood is a white light that lures the love it gives; and between the two is a chasm wider than between heaven and hell.

Was it worth while—this making of a little comedy of joy and service out of a five months' substitute job in a tiny frontier school? I can only answer: it was worth while to me; and every time I have made self the aim rather than service, I have tripped up both feet and come a cropper, though the world might be dubbing me successful.

Taking the train home the day before Christmas, I encountered half a dozen class friends coming in from the same kind of work. One was earning money to go abroad for voice culture; another, to put himself through law; a third was a medical student coming in from "killing patients" as we told him. There was no pullman. We were thankful in those days if the transcontinental came in within fifty hours of schedule time. In the confusion of

getting ourselves located in the day coach amid a crush of holiday travelers, just for a second, I fancied I caught a glimpse through the window of some of the big boys from the Beautiful Plains district running toward the mail car; but I thought nothing of it till next morning, Christmas Day, when in bed at home the mail was brought up. There was the usual bundle of cards and presents. I opened one parcel post-marked at the railway station where I had come in from the country. It was a little old-fashioned small Bible, no name on the fly leaf, but tucked in front was a sheet of note paper on which were written the words—"From your unknown grateful friend." It had cost a dollar, the hurried donor had not had time to erase the price; but a dollar in those days was as big as a thousand to-day; and the spirit behind the words could not be measured in price.

Though I still devoured old Solomon as a pilot chart to steer safely through the rocks of life, I had come to know that his quid pro quo, his creed of tit-for-tat, play-this-for-that—would have to give place to the higher Christ-ideal of giving the best in you without hope of other reward than the zest of life, though you might be crucified for the best service you could give; and though I still besieged God fero-

ciously for things I wanted and didn't get, my best enemy would never have accused me of being religious. Yet that Bible had come from a rough crude youth in the raw and in the making, as the embodiment of the most delicate tribute he knew how to offer; and it gave a parting glamour to the memory of Beautiful Plains that lingers to this day. I don't know whether you catch through all this how life began as something more than a job for so much per diem; how all the beauty and sweetness and zest of it had nothing to do with pay at all.

My little friend, who gave the sweet peas, was terribly anxious at this period lest I become what she called "only a teacher." I don't know what she meant by that. I don't think she knew herself, unless it was a gradual degeneration to a drab-gray narrowing existence on a joyless treadmill; but if she had been out in the rough and tumble of life on the frontier she would have had no fear of a drab-gray treadmill life. There were Saturdays when whole wagon-loads of us went duck shooting in the northern swamps, where the reeds grew higher than your horses' heads and you could keep your compass only by the far land-mark of some huge bonfire, where farmers were burning their chaff and straw. Ducks flack-

ered over-head low enough for you to hit them with your whip; and the wild geese held noisy confabulations in the stubble fields; and sometimes when you went crashing through the dry reeds back to dinner camp, something russet brown like the withered sedges would leap across your path on winged feet to go bounding out of sight before you got your senses,—just a flash of the laid-back horns; and you knew you had come on a moose. Driving home by moonlight, the silvered fenceless prairies took eerie spectral form. There was a scene shifting of ghosts. You heard the coyotes howl, or the foxes bark, bark, bark, sharp and clear; and afar on the crest of a ravine you could see the tepee tips of an Indian camp, the fires flickering in front of the tent-flaps, dogs and hobbled ponies and queerly clad forms shifting dark against the fire. Always these ghost forms were on the North and the West. You never saw them move on the South and East. The stars pricked through the frosted air in diamond points; and against the sky above the settlements flamed the billowing red clouds of the burning chaff piles, a sort of incense to the Spirit of the West. Or when the fire got into the reeds of the swamps, the whole sky line would be a mass of angry flame; and if the wind shifted, every man and woman of the

countryside got out on the fire line to beat back the stealthy snaky red thing that came creeping and forking toward the year's crops. If the drab-gray cataracts have not grown over our eyes, is there anything more beautiful and heroic than just the commonplace life of the commonplace day hallowed by our everyday commonplace loves? A whole bookful could be written on the heroism of that frontier life on the plains; and it would not consist of shooting-togs and men in buckskin. Oftener it was the quiet heroism of some gently nurtured woman keeping watch and guard alone in a prairie shack with the blizzard rampant outside; or of some little foreign mother saving her children in a swamp under wet blankets till the prairie fire had passed.

Winter set in very early that year, and a blizzard memorable yet on the plains swept from the Saskatchewan to the Missouri. With us, it broke from a heavy dull lead sky that had been ominously still for two days, before daybreak one mid-week morning; but farther South, it was not raging in full force till late in the afternoon, when school children were setting out for home. I had seen plenty of storms in the city, when not a vehicle would stir out for a couple of days; but the walls of

houses along the streets broke the force of the wind in town; and none of us ever stayed in for a storm. As the days shortened, the family where I boarded would place the breakfast on the table the night before and leave a very handy hired man to fry ham and eggs and have them on the table before three of us tumbled down stairs in haste to swallow our breakfasts and hurry off for school in a jumper sleigh. This morning I felt the house rocking to the wind; and there was a peculiar long low whining moan to the storm. Barefooted and still in my nightdress I looked out through the frosted window, rubbing a little clearing in one corner of the pane; snow was driving fine as pepper and salt; and the drifts were just beginning to puff up in little whiffs of white smoke. I suddenly recalled that the boy, who opened the school, lived five miles away. If the storm grew worse, he might not come, or might be late; and there was one little girl who had no sleigh and sometimes got a chance ride and sometimes didn't; and she was so regular in her attendance you could be sure she would come through fire or water. What if that youngster came; and the boy had not arrived to open the school? The prairie was literally dotted with tragedies from just such simple mischances. Only the year before, a

woman and her boy had been frozen to death trying to reach a neighbor's shanty to obtain aid for a sick man. By this time, I was dressed and downstairs. Neither of the children of the house had risen. It was half-past eight and there was no jumper sleigh at the door. If I had lived longer on the prairie, I would have known that neither diamonds nor rubies could tempt a true plainsman out of doors in a blizzard; but I did not know this, and kept thinking of that little girl. I had sense enough to run back upstairs and cast off all impediments in the way of superfluous skirts, and to draw on an extra pair of waist high close-knit tights. Then I put on a pair of heavy rubber wading boots; and wore, as nearly all Westerners wore, a coon coat buttoned right to the eyes with elbow gauntlets and a wedge cap down over ears. Running downstairs I unbolted the front door and was off.

The family told me afterwards that they never dreamed any human being could be so foolish as to dare a bad blizzard, the very dogs and coyotes knew better; but you see the young girl didn't; and that, too, is typical of the young girl wage-earner's attitude to life. In sheer ignorance of facts, mistaking her own headstrong determination for the favor of God,

believing that good intentions are a Jacob's ladder to angel deeds instead of a well-paved path to a certain unspecified pit your young girl wage-earner rushes headlong into dangers that the oldest campaigner would not touch for love or money.

The storm caught me and nearly lifted me off my feet. It was fun at first. The wind pumped the lethargy out of the lungs like a bellows, and the blood went racing, and the nerves tingling, and you did not walk on earth at all, but on air, with an intoxication of sheer youth sizzling in your brain that set you humming and singing. I was pretty sure I could not get lost; for barbed wire lined both sides of the road for the first mile. Then there was a diagonal cut across open prairie for, perhaps, a quarter of a mile; but you could not see the fence on either side; and I presently came to a dead stop, pulling with all my force against the wind, bent almost over, and gaining not a foot against the force of the white hurricane. I was breathless, hot and suddenly most fearfully tired, a sleepy tired. I turned my back to the storm for a minute to get a breath, and felt through the white howling funnel of air in a cyclone of fine frosty particles that stung like whip lashes or salt to the post of the barbed

wire fence on the right. I hung to this with my back to the wind till I got a breath, and became aware that my toes were stinging and numbing. I knew by this that I ought not to have come out; but I kept thinking of that little girl, she was such an ill-favored naughty find-me-in-the-wrong-place little monkey too, it would be just like her to be huddled up on the doorsteps of the schoolhouse, dead. I loosened my collar to get a breath, turned, faced the storm and beat ahead. This time, I came to a stop only four or five fence posts farther on; and I didn't want to sleep, oh no, you never want to sleep in the frost death, but I did most terribly want to sit down to rest for one minute, for only one minute. Feet didn't sting any more, but the wind had beaten my lungs till they felt raw with pain; and each breath felt as if your throat had swollen up and you hadn't room, as if you couldn't get a clean clear sort of water-drink satisfying breath. I know now it is the feeling a patient has under an anesthetic before the last drop into the dark of unconsciousness. It was the dull, sort of dead pain in my feet as if they didn't belong to me that warned me what the sleep exhaustion meant, what the desire to sit down for only one second's rest meant. I have known frontiersmen at this stage to beat a companion

up with fists, to slap him across the face to make him go on; so I turned, and bowed my head to the storm, and ran again with feet that felt like clumps of clownishness; but when I pulled up at the next fence-post for a breath, I knew I was far past half way; and I didn't let myself rest so long, and I rested oftener.

The last lap of the race against the storm, it came to the point where I had strength to spurt only from post to post. You didn't sink through the drifts—they were packed hard as earth—you skimmed up over them like a swimmer breasting billows, then the prairie between would be blown bare to earth; then you would clamber a rolling drift high as the fence top; and the storm would catch you and hurl you down in a cataract of snow. At the last post, I tried to face forward and get the exact location of the school in my head for the final spurt across the open prairie. The air ahead was one white shrieking Walpurgis of blizzard demons; they moaned; they screamed; they laughed; they ran up and down a gamut of fiendish glee, wailing off into a moan as the wind lulled for a fresh burst; and through the white tornado I saw ahead a dark form, then the drifts again in billows that rocked the earth; and stamping my feet to try and bring them alive with a weight of sleep like lead

above both eyes, and lungs so sore I felt as if they would bleed, I broke at a lame run across the open prairie, when there was neither fence post to hold me up nor wire to keep me on the trail. This last quarter mile was the worst danger; but two things helped me; I got my back to the North-West wind; and I have always had a kind of sure-footed instinct finding my way in the dark; but I had not a breath. Both feet were dead. The leaden sleep above my eyes had a trip-hammer beneath beating in my temples—I suppose, exhausted heart action—and the white squall was beginning to swim black; and I ran like one falling. I did, in fact, fall with a slamming thud right into the school porch; and there was no little rat of a freckle-faced girl lying huddled up dead as I had feared. The drifts had blown into the porch high as the door lock. I kicked through them. Thank God, no youngster's body lay under! I ran all round the school, and hallooed through the storm! Not a pupil had come. There wasn't a track to the sod stable. I did not wait to unlock the door. I sprang at it with all my might on my dead feet and burst it in. The schoolroom was blue white with frost and snow that had driven through the window sashes. Of course, there was no fire on. I could not wait to gather

wood. I seized the school books on my own desk and every book, paper and scribbler in sight, and dumped them into the big box stove, and set a fire roaring. Then I jerked off those rubber wading boots, the spurt of the last quarter mile run had brought my feet alive all right. There was no mistaking they belonged to me, they belonged to me to the very roof of my head with sensations something between inflammatory rheumatism and a toothache getting up speed. If I had been in a house the pain was so acute that I am sure I would have plunged my feet into warm water to get relief, and so probably lamed myself for six months; but, as there was no hot water, I did the only thing possible, I cut the over stockings off at the feet, and with a fur gauntlet rubbed snow against the under stocking. This prevented a break or burn of the flesh, which so often leads to gangrene and blood poisoning from bad freezings, then, when the pain grew too sharp to be endured, I got up and danced and pounded my feet and hurled good wholesome lively maledictions at the climate, where "it's cold but you don't feel it," which was the very best possible thing to get life back into dead feet. It was midday before I had myself and the school properly thawed out; and I made up

my mind that if I had to sleep in that school a week, I would not go back through that storm.

Back at the farmhouse, the people were frantic with anxiety. They had been out the night before and had slept late that morning. They did not discover that I had gone till the hired man came in from the barns. He followed down the lane as far as the road, then rightly concluded that if I had "got through," as he expressed it, I would be safely in by that time; if I hadn't, I would be too deep under the drifts to be found. The blizzard raged until five that night, then fell like a spent fury, with surly sharp whistlings and shrill complainings, and little tossings of wisps of curling drifts. By six o'clock the moon was up and we were in for one of those clear, sharp, hard, forty-below-zero nights that nearly always follow a bad blizzard. I looked out from the school door. I was hungry; and I could see the smoke of the farmhouse curling low and purple on the offing like the funnel of a ship at sea. There wasn't a sign of the barbed wire fence. It had been buried feet deep under the drifts. A coyote came up to the crest of a snow hillock and howled mournfully at the silver sickle rim of the cold moon. How do they know, those sinister bandits of the prairie, always to come out

and seek the dead after a storm? That settled it, I was going home. Getting hold of a "shinny" stick (we call them "hockey" sticks to-day) I set off over the drifts. I remember letting a halloo out that sent the coyote skulking; but I have no doubt he ran abreast of me on the other side of the fence drift all the way home. The drifts were hard packed as ice, you could glissade down the long slopes of them; but I followed their crests over the tops of the fence posts. My feet were aching but no longer painful. Half way home, I met the farm family come out to seek me. They had a funny look on their faces, half contempt, half admiration; as if I were a fool but not a half bad one.

"What did you do it for?" demanded the kind Irish mother, her buxom arms akimbo on her hips.

"I was afraid some of those poor kids that hadn't jumpers would be there," I apologized.

She rubbed her nose so vigorously back and forward on her fur sleeve that I thought she would wrench it off.

"Then I guess it's like Paddy when he ups and dies. We'll forgive you because you won't do it again."

They treated me to a great deal of rough cordial tenderness that night, of which I did

not in the least understand the reason. I heard "Johnnie," the hired man, confide to his boss that "that kid was a corker, but she was so dod-gasted green she'd better go home to her mawh." When I sent in returns for the government grant including that day, I had actually to prove that I had opened school. As the treasurer was a crusty penurious old fellow suspected of pocketing "off day" allowances for himself, the incident caused a good-natured laugh.

The storm that broke with us in the morning did not reach the state south of us till two in the afternoon. Many of the country teachers saw it coming and had dismissed their charges at noon. One young girl, not many years older than I was, had her dozen pupils all muffled up to the eyes when the storm broke roaring down the ravine like a cloudburst. She called the children back and told them they would all camp in the school for the night. Her children were very young. Toward eight o'clock at night, the wind became so violent that the frail roof began to creak and wrench and heave. She got her youngsters up off the floor, muffled them to the eyes; then tied each kiddie's arm to a long knitted scarf. There was no panic. She did not tell them what she feared. There

came a wilder swish, the roof lifted and whirled off like a hat. Down smashed stovepipes and over rolled the coal stove. Everything was flaming in a second. She grabbed the scarf and led her little line of mere babies out into the white whirl of the wild night. Holding the head and tail of the scarf herself, she led the little line in a half circle through the storm down the ravine to the nearest ranch house without the freezing of as much as an eyelash.

There were no Carnegie medal givers in those days. If you had suggested such a thing, you would have been ridiculed. Medal! Why give a medal for doing the day's duty of the day's job? So the term drew to a close, happy days of being "only a teacher," which have made me look twice ever since when I hear a man or woman use that epithet. It wasn't an "only" proposition at all. Why do they call themselves an "only this" or "only that"? What drew the gray cataracts across their eyes, and gave the droop of self-pity to the corners of bitter lips, and injected the vinegar of envy into the souls? Thousands, tens of thousands, are doing for a lifework what I was doing as a substitute; and they find their vocation leading down the trail of ageless adven-

ture, which the feet of youth have ever sought, to the big open world, to freedom, to opportunity for service, to independence and security. Multitudes of boys and girls on the frontier "bach'ing it" in 10 by 12 shanties with soap boxes for washstands and biscuit boxes for bookshelves have put in their homestead duties while teaching a frontier school. What if the wolves did howl all night, drawn by the odor of supper ham and eggs? The jewels were on the dew in the morning, and zest edged every light, and life was a good sporting proposition worth all the odds of effort and pain and trial! If I could have stayed and homesteaded a farm, and lived a life in the open, chains would not have drawn me back to city life; but, at that time, we didn't realize that a girl could do that kind of thing; and I was needed in my own home.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN GOD WENT BACK ON ME

The phrase sounds irreligious; but it isn't. There are none of us who have passed through tight places; who have borne heavy burdens, which other hands than ours have bound; who have been called upon to pay the penalty of our ancestors' transgressions in body and soul, in incompetency and skulking, in weakness and sin; but we have at some time or other, perhaps, for a moment of illness or a night of darkness which only the soul knows, turned our faces to the wall with a horrible sinking conviction that God has gone back on the Game.

God, Nature, Fate (whatever we call the Great Unknown) doesn't seem to play according to any rules at all. Just when we have come to swear by some rule of thumb as by the eternal rocks, the thing breaks under our Faith like a snapped reed; and we fall crippled. Perhaps it is faith in the personal intervention of a personal God; perhaps in the great scien-

tific law of cause and effect; perhaps in scales of justice so finely balanced that a hair's weight a century back sways our destiny of to-day. One man calls his talisman religious faith: another calls his scientific law; but just when each is leaning most heavily on his law of life, a Grinning Goddess called Chance intervenes. Nature slips a cog, or a belt, or something. The good man, whose touch blesses all he passes, loses his reason or his life. The blackguard, whose breath blights the atmosphere and curses posterity with incurable disease, lives on in redundant health a menace to life. Innocence is torn to pieces by the beasts of the human jungle. Guilt passes smiling unctuously down life's way.

We may call it pessimism, or agnosticism, or loss of faith in God, the epithet doesn't matter much, the point is we turn our faces to the wall with a horrible sinking fear that, perhaps, there are no rules to the game at all, except Malignant Force. A certain brand of Christianity takes unction to itself at this point of stress for what it calls resignation; and turns up the whites of its eyes to any old curse that may come along as God's will. I know a woman who thanked God that her boy was a cripple, as though the Almighty had gone into the business of crippling little boys to keep

them from being naughty; when, as a matter of fact, not moonshine sentimentality, her boy was a cripple because she in her fatuous presumptuous sex ignorance persisted in marrying an old man who was foully diseased. Her ignorance did not save the child. Neither did her faith shield his innocence. A man cannot marry a parasite, and expect a paraclete. Neither can a woman marry a beast and expect a saint. You pay as terrible a penalty for errors of judgment as errors of morals. You can't put your hand in the fire and not get it burned; and you can't put your soul in a cesspool and not get it soiled; and turning our faces to the wall, saying: "I suffer: I suffer": or saying unctuously "God's will be done"; or sinking into the black despair that there is no God at all does not shield us from the results of our own errors of judgment.

I have known heads of homes who let "poverty come like an armed man," let their children sink down to a condition without shirts to their backs; and then consoled themselves that it could not be helped: it was fate, or the will of God, or the social system: they "had done their best." *Whereas no living soul has ever done his best till he has done It,* whatever the job of life has put up to him; and *no living soul has a right to say he can't, till he dies*

trying to put It over. Only then may we "curse God and die," and declare there are no rules to the game. We want to be careful of snap judgments that the Ruler of the Universe is a fool. We want to be careful we are not the fool; and skulking the facts of the case doesn't get you anywhere.

I didn't learn these things from old Solomon. I got them bumped in the way you do; and the bumps hurt at the time.

When you do your work well, there is always plenty of work to be done. I had barely come in to the city from filling out this friend's term in the country, when I was offered and accepted in succession, two other substitute positions, one, in a small backward almost deserted "boom" town; another, in the city, an enormous preparatory collegiate class of seventy youngsters in their early teens, mostly boys. I think it was my happy relations with the big obstreperous fellows of the Beautiful Plains district, that brought me the offer of the last position. The teacher was dying of tuberculosis. In order not to cut off his salary, I was put in as a "temporary" at a figure that seemed perfectly godless opulence to me, $65 a month. A regular supply would have cost

$100 a month; so by paying me $65, there was enough of a balance to keep the sufferer as long as he lived; and he lived for two years.

I deemed myself the luckiest person alive. I wanted to laugh and sing through life. Now, instead of stopping to go to the university, I would study at night, take my degree, then when I had finished, I would have enough saved to go abroad. I was quite sure God was playing the game according to the rules; so presumptuously do we ascribe our blind runnings to and fro on an ant hill to the Great Ruler of the Universe.

The acceptance of the position was a blunder for a lot of reasons. It diverted me from my true aim; and if you have an aim, the only way to get to it is to go to it in spite of whatever may be between you and it. Then, classes of seventy to eighty are either physical suicide to the teacher, or gradual mental suicide to the child. The teacher either does justice to the children, and injustice to self; or reverses the process. Besides, we were in that half-baked educational state of piling experiment on experiment. One week it was free hand writing. Another week, the youngsters were set to working their jaws in what was called "articulation." Then a physical culture or Delsarte crank would come along; and we would

have an epidemic of that; soulful poses, expressing personality through the body and that sort of attitudinizing. One week, we were told that "to punish or strike a child was to insult God, its creator." Another week, some of the supervisors would not be quite so sure that our grandfathers' shingle methods might not help a boy's morals more than mushy, contempt-inviting pleadings for him "to be good." The educational process was one constant run of fads, ignoring the fact that the aim of all education is to prepare for living; and the best foundation for that preparation is character. If the teacher realized that, all these non-essential fads could be worked into the main current of aims, instead of being pushed up as ends in themselves. Besides, the stereotyped routine robbed life of all zest. Skulkers must always be harnessed to routine; but from skulkers good work never comes; and to tie enthusiasm down to routine, to an hour's exercise a day, say, in working your jaws on "a-ee-ou," is to clip life of all zest. I taught with fury the first term, and did not spare myself, and studied till four in the morning, and ended up with typhoid fever, which took every cent of the savings. The second term, I spared myself, put the burden on the youngsters, let the sluggards slug, and the laggards lag, and the block-

heads dream undisturbed by me behind their desks, and still studied till four in the morning. But I had had enough of it. It was stealing something from life that neither gold nor rubies will buy. It was robbing life of zest. It was painlessly etherizing all initiative. It was systematizing, machine-standardizing, routine-hypnotizing into a factory process what ought to be as much a living growth as the culture of a rose garden. It was, in fact, subjecting roses and cabbages and carrots and cauliflowers and orchids and cacti to the very same treatment; and expecting good results, which, of course, we did not get. Was that the reason, I wondered, that so many teachers come to middle life disillusioned, with fires quenched? I could not answer that question then; and I can't now.

I was restive for other reasons. To have a happy life you must swing on your own pivot; and not teeter round the center of gravity of some other personality. If you want to be independent at forty, you must build on your own foundations at twenty. If you spend your youth substituting some other person's place, some other person will substitute your place when you come to middle life. You must aim to own your own labor and get the value out of it for yourself; or you will come to old

age and some other fellow will own the profits of your labor. If you are etherized, you will probably think it all right. If you are still alive, you will probably become a "ramping red" something or other, cursing things as they are; whereas you should probably be cursing yourself for not having planned ahead to own your own labor just as soon as you could learn the rules of the game.

I didn't analyze things out in this fashion at that time. I was just desperately restive, as it seems to me half the world of workers is restive to-day. I knew I wasn't getting anywhere; neither are the great majority of workers. I had deferred university work to save; and I wasn't saving a cent. The collapse had struck the West, I can only describe it by saying, like a hurricane. Miles upon miles of city houses stood empty, with streets lonelier than mountain canyons. Blocks that had sold at boom prices of from $70,000 to $200,000 now went under the hammer for taxes at a few thousands. It didn't affect the family income, but it did bring lame ducks limping home, who needed help. Boys, who had set out too early, had to come home and set out all over again, with a lot of fool-pride acquired in "boom" inflation, which they had to discard before

they could make the new start. One brother, who had been making $10,000 a year before he was twenty-six and not saving a cent of it, now came home down to $30 a month, with debts that he could never hope to pay, and habits of extravagance, and lungs giving very ugly unmistakable signs. There were other lame ducks in the family connection, who are not a part of this story; but having been diverted from my aim to save, I now found that I could not save a cent.

Just here comes in a question which can be answered only in a paradox; and it is a paradox you will not understand till you are at the place yourself. *Is it worth while to hurt yourself to help others?* The woman with the feckless husband, the mother with the spendthrift son, the sister with the no-good brother, the girl with the just-one-more chance lover all have to answer that question; and are answering it daily all over the world to their own hurt. Let us put the question differently! Is it worth while to help others if you have to hurt yourself doing it? If I were not telling this story of a commonplace life anonymously, I could not speak frankly now. I have helped people in dire stress from their own tragic habits binding them in cords of slav-

ery, I believe the Bible expression is "cords of sin," who have scarcely had their wounds healed before they stole from the hands that fed them. I have broken myself financially twice, down to a dime, trying to stand between two people and the results of their own misdeeds: one a man relative; the other, a woman who was no connection, and they have barely been well away from the edge of the pit of their own damnation, before they have broken violently back over the same old way with the same old penalties and the same old wail of "I suffer." And casually, without hurt to myself, I have had the privilege of helping others, who have made good in a way to make the firmament to shine and the heart to glow. Does it pay to help if it means hurt to yourself? Each must answer as life has taught. *Life has taught me that if people will let you hurt yourself to help them, they are unworthy of help; they will never make good; they will suck your vitality as a vampire sucks blood, then put fangs in the hands that rescued them.* But if, and please note, if they will not let you hurt yourself to help them, if they will fight your help on such terms, then they are worth the biggest gamble on the chancy Wheel of Life: they will return your interest a thousand fold for every dime you invest in their

future. I'm enough of a gambler to like to take sporting chances; but I frankly think many of the vaunted sacrifices of women are as bootless as the bloody sacrifice of a lamb to wipe out the sins of some fool-human, who had much better have cut his own throat and gone to swift judgment, or taken his licks without whining and learned to quit.

Anyway, I knew this life was not getting me anywhere; and with exactly $200 to show for two years' work I quit to go on with the university. If you ask why I did not think of marriage as the way out, I answer because my mother had taught us that love was *not* a way *out,* but a way *in;* and that we must never pass those portals unless love's torch lighted the way; that if this light were darkness, it would be the greatest darkness of the human soul.

There were other reasons that went deep down in earliest memories. When a mere child myself, I had seen a relative's child die; the end had come with such unexpected suddenness—suffocation from bronchitis, that no one had thought to get us children out of the room. "Will he never—never speak again?" the mother had sobbed. "No, God has taken him," someone had answered. Then I had dashed out of the house. There stood the doctor at the door. This is what he was saying: uncon-

scious of little ears within hearing. "That child never had the faintest chance to grow to manhood. With a mother from a family disposed to lungs, and a father, a hopeless asthmatic, what chance had the little chap?"

I ran to the farthermost fence corner on the farm and sat down to think. My conclusion was that, if "he hadn't had a chance," he ought not to have been born; and I am not sure that childhood inference had not more of wisdom in it than the dictum of sages that those "who refrain from marriage are criminals to the race." As life went on, I had learned what "not having a chance meant." With two exceptions, there was not a member of our own large family endowed with sufficient physical stamina. All this was so deep in consciousness that it was hardly articulate, but, like many things so deep in the fiber that we are unconscious of them, it dominated conduct.

Love had come, of course, in guises and disguises and masquerades. There was one divinity student, I remember, who wrote the most exquisite ballads and was a perfect encyclopedia of German and French literature. The fellow had a forehead like a dome and intellectually was most brilliant. He was also likely to inherit ample means; but I never knew a woman, who could endure him. Why? For

some reason, which instinct felt but judgment could not define. His eyes were blue; but they were not clean blue. His complexion was ruddy; but it was a muddy ruddy. I did not know the meaning of either of those signs, but I knew that he caused a sensation of physical repulsion among women. Why? "Judge not that ye be not judged." I used to think it very wicked to condemn people even in one's mind without proof and jury verdict. I had not learned that ants have their antennæ, and humans their instincts; and that both have been given to forewarn danger. I used to flagellate myself for not liking this man. He was strong on literature, and could quote Browning or Tennyson by the yard. Well, once I loaned him Pope. Now, Pope's epigrams have a good deal of neat meat; but his earlier poems have a good deal of rank smelling putrid carrion. The carrion had never troubled me. I had lightly skimmed or skipped, and forgotten it. When he returned the volume, he thought I ought not to read it. When I asked him why, he shook his head mysteriously as of something women and children ought not to know, and then changed the subject. When I opened Pope, I found the rancid or putrid or whatever you like to call 'em poems all delicately marked as not to be read.

It didn't disgust or infuriate me. I exploded with laughter; and here is the comment I put down: "Punk takes fire easiest. So much youth, so much intellect, but what a lot of rotten wood this man must have at his heart's core to take fire so easily." And that finished him. Lest this seem a snap judgment, the first year in the university confirmed it. We were all waiting one day for half a dozen belated theologs. to come in to the lecture on Kant. "The meds." were there; so were "the legs.", as we called the law students; but half a dozen divinities failed to turn up. "Where's first row?" I asked "a med." He gave me a put-off answer. "Where were those theologs.?" I asked "the med.'s" sister upstairs in the dormitory. "Smutty trial in court this morning," she answered with a funny look; and I recalled that a filthy case was being aired in the courts. "Smutty trial, and our ten stars went to see that the judge did his duty—Yah," she laughed, turning a handspring off the couch, where she was lounging, "but thank the Lord the meds. and legs. aren't so good."

There were others. Another man I recall as one of the best pals I had ever known. He was not in the university, but we seemed to think and read almost in team work. We

seemed to find out the same new books simultaneously, to read along the same lines, to think the same thoughts without expressing them. I suppose it was because we were so dead sure we were only chums that we were both so cock-sure that the companionship could not slip into more. We went snow-shoeing in the same parties. We went shooting and climbing and outing in the same crowds. It was about the time I was becoming horribly anxious about my body.

I was growing to hate it; it checkmated plans so often. I had regarded it as a machine that had to be stoked up for high speed, but to be treated always as a slave. In my heart of hearts I despised the physical side of life; and, if we had faith enough in God, I didn't think the body mattered much. People, who were always thinking of their "carcass" as I called it nauseated me; and now my carcass took its fine revenge. On the question of the body I had come to divide people pretty much into two classes; and I knew which I elected to join. There were those who deified their bodies and made little gods out of their passions. Them I regarded as sensualists. There were those, who denied the body and kept it under whip and bit, the ascetics. I ignored the third class, those who defy the body; and are fools. I

didn't realize that the body is quite as much in the scheme of life as the soul, and as necessary to it as a temple to the spirit. I elected to the ascetic and qualified for the fool. There were things the matter with throat and lungs that hung on like a hawk's talons. I didn't cough when I was bursting to cough for fear of what it meant; but I had wakeful fevered nights and wore high spots in my cheeks, that were a danger signal. I wouldn't let myself acknowledge the danger; but it gave me horrible sinkings of spirit. I couldn't believe that God, nature, life, whatever you call the Ruling Power, would play such a mean trick as to fail me, when I banked on Him. There were such desperately good reasons for wanting to live. I had to live that others might live. Such an egotist is youth trying vainly to bind God to a child's behests; so blind to the fact that it is we who play the mean trick and fight God, when we abuse body or soul.

Very depressed but never confessing it, I was out driving with this man. He was one of fortune's favored ones, born with a gold spoon in his mouth. Everything had been done for him, and a professional career was opening out with great promise. He had an incisive intellect that you liked to watch as

you follow quick keen sword fencing. We were talking of a mutual acquaintance, a woman, who was going a reckless course. She posed as a spiritualist, theosophist, or something, "no body at all between her chin and her heels" as our cynical old French professor described her. My comrade flicked his horse with the whip with a funny look.

"Oh, the furies destroy such women," he said perfectly frankly. "They talk sexlessness in the name of purity till they lash some fool-man into a maniac: then there's a grand smash of fine china all round."

It was this kind of incisive cutting to the quick beneath the pretence that promised such a future for this man as a pleader. I took it as a compliment that he had forgotten I was a woman. "By George," he exclaimed softly, following his own thoughts, "the spectacle of a clean man mated to a Venus Meretrix, or a clean woman to a Satyr is a crucifixion compared to which Christ's suffering was child's play."

Just for a second I wondered which point of view he was thinking of, the man's or the woman's. I looked at him sidewise. He had snapping dark eyes and a chiseled profile. It was what you would call a hard face; but I never disliked hardness that was clean cut. It

was a face that might have been cruel, perhaps small, to an enemy. That was bad. Big force would just smash and quit. Cruelty would ferret and hunt and pursue. Children might soften the hard lines. All the same, I liked his keen perception of the truth of woman's sufferings. I knew it to be so horribly true. Deep in my heart was a consciousness that if I had belonged to a former generation, to the generation of women that had to marry willy-nilly, or be damned; that if I had not known my own health was going to punk, that I undoubtedly had the hereditary taint of a lung tendency; that if I had not heard the doctor say "Poor little chap, he never had a chance," with all that was implied, it would have been easy to fall in love with this man and marry him.

Did his finely sensitized mind feel the possibility of such a change in our relationship as "pals"? (The older I grow the more confident I am that thoughts go out like arrows; that mental states permeate the very atmosphere; that men and women are often criminally guilty for the mental touch that goes out from them in electric fire to some other.) He turned suddenly, and caught my look. I flushed to the roots of me. It was the first time such a thought had ever entered my mind; and I

had been caught in the act, red-handed as it were. In an endeavor to relieve the pent silence, he began rattling off about a poor chap we had both known in the old collegiate days —a fellow who had swept his studies aside like a broom, and died just as he finished, typhoid followed by galloping consumption. The similarity to my own case was too marked not to be piercingly interesting.

"Do you know that poor duffer had been supporting a mother and invalid sister?" he said. "The mother will have to take in washing now to keep the daughter, spinal something or other. I had the estate to settle up, a homestead out in the Norwegian settlement. Of course, considering the case, I charged only ten per cent."

It was the "*only*" that went through me like a knife; the sheer unconsciousness of his own meanness of soul. Professionalism had asphyxiated something in his manhood. This kind of man would charge interest in the settlement of the estate of a Jesus Christ. He would expect his relationship with wife and children to be dominated by a purse string, which he could tighten or loosen, which they must wear as a bit. ("The wrong thou doest me, I will forgive; but the wrong thou doest thyself, my friend, will I not forgive to the end

of time.") It was winter. A wonderful afterglow lay primrose on the snow of the river bed where we were driving; and the bells jingled in a sort of flute music across the big prairie silence. He turned sharply.

"You are shivering," he said, tucking the robes closer. "And you don't breathe right, it's too audible in frosty air. Did you ever have your lungs sounded? I have been watching your health. It isn't right."

"It is nothing," I said, putting a gauntlet across my mouth to soften the frost breath.

"Yes, it is," he answered impetuously. "I have been watching you. I didn't want to speak so soon; because I wanted to be sure of your mind first; and I wanted to make some headway in my profession first, but I want you to quit this college game and let me take care of you." And, before I knew it, he was pouring out a volume he had not meant to say. I had to grab the lines to stop his impetuous torrent, it was all of expediency, what he hoped to make of his life; and all the time I kept hearing the doctor's voice above the dead chi! , "The poor little chap hadn't a chance: the poor little chap hadn't a chance." ("By the unseen are we bent and tortured most.")

"Please stop," I begged. "For reasons I

can not tell you I can never marry; and if I could I wouldn't. I simply never shall."

If he had turned his incisive mind to this personal matter with the same clearness he had discerned the impersonal ones a moment ago, I could have loved and respected him to the end; but the face he turned wore an expression of wounded fury, of vanity hurt. I was as horribly hurt as he. He simply could not believe that any human being lived on this earth, who did not want to marry. We drove home in silence, and saw very little of each other for a year or two. I was off on a health quest. He had gone abroad on legal business. Four years from the time he had charged the dead Norwegian's estate up "only ten per cent.," he died on the shores of the Mediterranean of tuberculosis, so terribly long are the arms of that grinning travesty of Justice, which we try to believe does not exist.

You will notice that references to lungs come often now. This was not because there were more cases of lungs. It was that a fear had grown in myself that made me notice all cases of lung sufferers. I took my friend's advice, and without telling the family, went to our doctor. He had been "a lunger" himself, come

West for his health. He did not even examine my lungs. He sat looking at me without saying anything. He had graduated from the university of which my grandfather had been president. He sat playing with a paper knife. It must have been one of the most painful operations that he ever performed in his life as a brilliant surgeon.

"How brave are you?" he asked abruptly.

"Fire away," I answered. "I have never skulked a fact yet."

Outwardly, I must have appeared hilarious, even reckless. Inwardly, I was squirming like a thing skinned alive and raw.

"Know anything about your mother's eyes?"

It was such a sudden switch, I was taken unawares.

"I know that she has been complaining of her glasses."

He fiddled with his paper knife for a minute or two.

"I examined her eyes the other day," he said.

(She had stolen away and had her eyes examined without telling me, as I had stolen away to have my lungs examined without telling her.)

"She will be totally blind within a few years," he added.

After that, nothing mattered. All the dooms he could pronounce on me didn't matter. I did not cry out because the discipline of life had taught me that to cry out against life is the bleat of the sheep calling the Wolves of the Fates.

The doctor was still talking. I seemed to catch what he said like a voice far away at the end of a distant telephone. At one sweep, he had knocked away the whole foundation of my religious beliefs—If God backed me, I could not be bucked: if I had faith enough, all the mountains of difficulty in life would be removed; with the Spirit of Christ in my heart, I had the talisman that could defy the Fates. (I forgot that Christ Himself for the ardor of a belief had been ignominiously and shamefully crucified.) The doctor was saying, "I thought, if I told you, you would try to be eyes and ears and hands to your mother, to anticipate her wishes; and, as she is very frail, she need never know how swiftly she is going blind. She could not stand an operation. Besides, it is not cataract. It is a nerve disease brought on by overstrain, I should say, and nervous harassment. Your mother is a sacrifice to a foolish social convention that under no circum-

stances should a good woman get a divorce. When a man does not, cannot, or will not live in harmony with his home, does not support his wife and children, and makes life a continual nervous turmoil, I cannot understand the religious boycott against a woman who would preserve some atmosphere of love for her children by getting a divorce. Your mother is a sacrifice to that old prejudice. No use weeping over spilt milk, it's done." (I was not weeping; I was sitting petrified.) "As your mother is so frail, her eyesight will probably last as long as she lives. I thought I'd tell you so you could spare her knowing it. Let the knowledge come gradually, be her hands and her feet and her eyes. Now, about you," he spun round, looking at me. "You know how I came into this country? I was carried into this country on a stretcher. I don't tell the public; but for the first six months, I slept on the bare chairs of my office and lived on," he paused; he was notoriously a hard drinker, "lived on whisky and peanuts. But I'm very much alive to-day. You are not as bad as that. In fact, you are not bad at all. You have barely started to toboggan down hill; but you have driven your horses too hard ever since you were born. I think you inherit it from that little piece of bisque

animated by electric fire who is your mother. I have been watching you a long time. Principal —— tells me you walk through work without knowing it; but the trouble is your dynamo is so blamed high charged you are going to blow up your power house and go to smash before you've begun life. Your lungs are narrow and poor. Your breathing is bad. Your temperamental tendencies are bad. Your pulse is always high, it was ridiculously high even at normal when you had typhoid fever. I remember you used to have night sweats and a little dry hard metallic hack then. Tell me the truth now, don't lie to yourself, do you do that yet?''

I had to confess that I did both horribly, that there were nights when I could wring my pillow slip it was so wet.

He bent his paper knife till it almost broke in the back. Then, he threw it down impatiently. ''Chuck it,'' he said, ''chuck everything for a couple of years! What's a college degree behind your name? What's the whole alphabet tacked on to it, if you graduate for a funeral? Go East and rest for the winter; then come back here for the summer. I want you to rest and eat beefsteak and live in sunlight for about two years. You think you can't

quit, but if you die you'll have to quit. How old are you? Nineteen! I thought so! Well, humanly speaking you have fifty years to live if you take care of yourself; and you haven't one to live if you don't."

"Meantime, if I can't teach or go to college, what is to buy the beefsteak?" I asked.

He exploded in a harsh laugh. "My little girl, you haven't got close enough up to death yet to lose sight of the non-essentials. Teach! You are absurd—you with your lungs hope to live breathing second-hand air in superheated university rooms alternated with forty degrees below cold! Have some sense! You are not to enter a college room or a class room again for ten years. Let me know the train you go East by; and I'll be at the station to see you off! How about it—ways and means? God knows, I don't, child! There aren't any ways and means left out here since the boom blew up." (I knew he was thinking of his own whisky and peanut days.) "You've got to devise means by hook or crook to keep yourself afloat for two years"; and he rose, and bowed me out.

The church we attended stood opposite his house. I looked at it and smiled bitterly in the frosty twilight. It seemed a monument

to a lie. All it stood for in my life crumbled to dust. Even old Solomon went by the board. Only the lone Christ crucified stood out a reality. He had played according to the rules of the game, and got Himself assassinated, murdered, done to death on a tree, like a culprit lynched for crime. A great hulking laborer went lumbering past drunk. I envied him his strength. I could have throttled him to get it if throttling would have got it for me; but what a parody this drunkard seemed on the promises of God! I had been asking for bread, and received a stone; for meat, and received a serpent. Was this the end of the faith that was to move mountains? Was Christ, after all, only an impracticable idealist, dreaming with His head in the clouds? Was life what the German pessimists called it, a sort of trap; a blind alley in which we found ourselves; an endless vicious circle of coming into existence with risk and anguish to our mothers, and going out, if not in a second anguish, then at best in a Lethean lethargy, that let us forget the evils we had done as we fell asleep? I had not learned that often, when we are asking for bread, we are snatching greedily at husks, not corn; that sometimes the long way home is the sure way; that when in confusion of values we wander

off the path of wisdom, the bumps and cuts and bloodgashes on our feet are certain to drive us back and keep us on the true trail. We have to learn that, when God seems to go back on us, He may be engineering circumstances to give us a slap on the back to stiffen up our flabby backbones. Too often, when we call on our Satan of sloth and stupidity and sin, "Get Thee behind me, sirrah!" it is in the ardent though inarticulate hope that he will push us into exactly what we should avoid.

If you ask why in this crisis, instead of wailing aloud to high heaven, I did not throw city life aside, take up a homestead and go out and live in the open, I answer for the very same reason that you did not see over the crest of the whelming billows, when you went down in the trough of the wave in the crisis of your own life. I didn't because I was too stupid; because the tears of my own ego kept me from discerning the opportunities lying all about. In other words, I was in a prison of my own personality; and stupidity had locked the door. Literally, one could have picked up homesteads within a stone's throw of the city at that time for $100 relinquishment fee—homesteads that later sold, not for a thousand an acre, but a thousand a foot. I didn't be-

cause the Chinese foot-bindings of prejudice still shackled me. I thought I had the most independent views of life, but I hadn't really realized that a woman is a free entity entitled to do what is best for her well-being. A bean held close enough before the pupil of your eye will shut out the fairest view of life. Unfortunately, most of us have egos a good deal larger than a bean. At the present moment mine was shutting out God. Because my little top-heavy pyramid of life plans had kited over in a glorious upset like a pile of baby blocks, the sidewalk rocked beneath me as I walked. The frosty air had lost its fine tang. It came with the rasp of something raw; and the very sleigh bells seemed to jangle out of tune. I chose the loneliest street out of the city, and walked and walked for miles. Where the avenue seemed to jump off into nowhere, like life, into the infinitude of the darkening prairie, impalpable, elusive, misty, with here and there the lamp of a shanty twinkling like a marsh light, I pulled myself up with a quick jerk to think.

First of all, I had to quit. Second, I had to get out. Third, I had to——, it was a blank wall. "When in doubt, don't." The trouble was I couldn't "don't." The spurs of neces-

sity were in me. I had to go on and do something, if the plunge took me over a precipice. Of the $200 saved, about $150 remained. I could leave half that, and still have enough for my return ticket East. I turned back up the long wide avenue, heavy footed and heavy hearted. Snow began falling in heavy flakes that assumed the most exquisitely beautiful forms, like winged things. "Yes," I thought, "and, at one breath, they melt. Somebody turns a switch, and the lights go out. There's a God somewhere; and He's an artist of beauty all right; but I'm not quite sure He isn't a cynic." Because so many others have passed the same place, I confess frankly that I hated life and the whole rotten scheme of things. You deified the body; and lo, it turned putrid under the sensualist's touch! You defied it, as I had; and behold, a reckless rider unhorsed! You denied it; and spent your life in ascetic prayers—what for? To have them come back empty from echoing voids cold and hard as these northern stars.

The ego in front of my eye that night was about the size of the universe.

CHAPTER V

THE EASIEST WAY

When a woman bangs into a fact so hard that it bruises and breaks her bones spiritual, so to speak, she usually does one of two things, wraps herself up in a lot of lying platitudes; "It can't be helped," "God's will be done" and so on, the whole gamut of the sheep code; or, through a sweat of agony of which she tells no soul, works her way out to larger beliefs, to what the fact means.

When a woman's little world of beliefs collides with a fact, and collapses, it is not the end of the road for her. It is only a taking stock of things at the cross roads. She has to decide whether to continue following the same old path, colliding with the same old facts that gash tender feet; or to follow a new trail; it may be, blaze a new trail to new beliefs. She can persuade herself that what she did was best; that it is God's will women should suffer; that good intentions are the rungs up a Jacob's ladder, not the paving stones of a cer-

tain unspecified place; or, she can face the music of her own making honestly and accept the fact as a fairly forcible and plain revelation that the God of Things doesn't intend this particular trail for these particular feet.

With a man it is different. From the time he gets his first good thumping on the football field, it may be undercuts and side-jabs and fouls, he knows there is a cosmos of fact outside his own hide; and he accepts its teaching. Unless a girl has had mighty wise training, she does not acknowledge that cosmos of fact till much later in life, when she is actually hurt. That is why women are often so cruelly narrow in their judgments of one another, and so dogmatically conservative on matters of which they know less than a child. Trail making in the world of fact is terribly hard going for the average girl.

I learned all these things now, in the raw, not from Solomon, but from bumps. I had to work; and I hadn't the health to work. My mother was going blind and needed my support; and I had undermined my health so that I could not support her. I understood in a way that telling could never have taught me the fearful weariness on many a wage-earner's face; they see the inevitable Doom com-

ing, and haven't the gumption, or spiritual agility, or physical ability to sidestep and avert it.

I do not think, from that day to this, that any wage-earning girl has ever needed to tell me her own particular, peculiar and personal Hell, the black pit of despair in the bottom of her own soul, which terrifies her more than all the lurid flaming Hells preached from pulpits. I know it from her face before she has guessed that I have read her secret. Often I can read the weakness in herself that has paved the way to that Hell. Because It is our own fault, we do not expect less help from God; and because it is her own fault, I do not know that we should help the girl who is in stress any the less.

Times untold, I have turned on a girl struggler, and told her what was making her weep her eyes out at night; and once or twice, drawn by that knowledge almost clairvoyantly, when neither they nor I have uttered a word, I have followed a woman worker to her lodgings to find her sobbing her heart out, or contemplating "making a hole in the river." By that, don't think for the fraction of a second that all you have to do is fish your drowning victim out. Not much! The pit into which we fall is digged too deeply in *the bottomless stu-*

pidity of our own characters: that's why we keep falling into it.

Likewise of the man worker! I understood now as all the telling under the sun could never have taught me why certain types of men, flabby in body and flabbier in will and mental vision, became terribly world weary and worn and bitter at forty; became subject at times to devilish, reasonless frenzies of fault-findings and debauches and abuse. They were at war with self; and therefore at war with life. They were Hamlets, with something to be done which they were too weak to do. They were frenzied prisoners beating their heads against the walls of the dungeon; and the dungeon was their own personality of incompetency, of unfitness, of folly, of vice, of stupidity, of mental vision obscured by the mists coming up from the rotting of the dogs in their own cellar.

As this is the unexpurgated tale of how a woman beat her way out to happiness, I have to set down something here of which I should be ashamed; but I'm not. By the time I had walked back the long avenue to the center of the city opposite the church we attended, I was perfectly well aware my world had col-

lapsed. "If God backed me, I couldn't be bucked"; but hadn't I bucked God?

Then I knew: you can't break laws; they break you. You must not only pray for strength. You must fight for strength; and the only peace worth having is the peace that is a victory. I had said to myself that I would never bring any child into the world with the physical handicap which we had all suffered. I would never enter the Hell of a loveless union, which wrecked so many women's lives. There were two blind walls! I would avoid them both; but here I was unhorsed, disabled, down and out, trapped in the cul-de-sac of woman's physical disability just the same!

Then it dawned on me! I had fallen into the pit! Why? Because I had been colossally, impenetrably, asininely, hugely, grotesquely, thickly stupid! That the educational system helped my stupidity and indurated the dense arrogance of us all didn't extenuate my fault in the least. I had been a stupid blockhead, headstrong, fatuous, a fool! I had attempted to go against nature, instead of with her! I had built up my little rule o' thumb theory of how I would direct my life; independent of the great laws of life, which no human being can direct but only Destiny or God! I

had expected God to bend to me, instead of bending my puny atom to His laws!

Stupidity! I execrated the word; and the older I grow, the harder I hate what it stands for, conceit, ignorance, presumption, asinine, fatuous, headstrong ego on a rampage! We may need Hell to burn out our vices; but Purgatory must needs have fire, too, to smelt out this most smug of human amalgam, plain thick-headed stupidity! From that day to this, I have hated stupidity more than I do sin. Sin, we know for what it is. It is branded on its face with the mark of the beast; but stupidity comes decked out as a saint, smug, presumptuous, unctuous, thick, fumble-fingered, clumsy-footed, mumbling in God's name blacker follies than Hell could spawn. I looked at the church. Then, I looked at myself! I knew very well why my life plans had been ditched! I had bucked God's laws of health and body! Well, I'd take my licks and never whine! A frenzy of loathing, of self-nausea swept over me! I stamped the snow-padded asphalt pavement till my feet pained; and, well, I had come to the place where the safety valve had to blow off in tears, or——. I didn't weep; and our mother had brought us up to eschew slang as the Devil eschews Holy Water. What I uttered was a good deal stronger and hotter than slang.

I said that I execrated stupidity. Let it go at that!

Was it wise to let the safety valve blow off before I went home? I don't know. You'll have to answer that for yourself. It was the first word of the kind that I had ever uttered in my life; and it was the most appropriate word I knew. Lots of women in such a case alternate between tears and depression; then depression and tears; then tears and depression. If I have to tackle tears or,—give me the "or," every time! They leave me in fighting trim, hot and on the rebound; but hysterics and water works, they will dissolve strongest vim and iron nerve into dish-water! When I see them coming, I have only one recourse, the shortest sprint to the tall and all-hiding timbers!

From this time on I never prayed for this or that; this boon or that; but only for clear-visioned knowledge of the truth and sense to use it when I got it. The admonition of the hired man from the meadows of the long ago came rippling in a sort of laughter through my stupid penitence—"When you raise the devil, hang on, or break your neck." If I had been envious before of strength as part of a woman's equipment in life, it became a fetish

with me now. Of all the stupidity of human history, surely this was the greatest. What was woman's peculiar job? The race. How had we equipped her for it? Set up as the beau-ideal of womanhood, toward which all girlhood should strive, the clinging vine idea, the ivy and the oak, the parasite existence, the vampire blood-sucking thing!

"Don't cross your knees! It isn't ladylike! Don't swing your arms! Don't be too vigorous! Don't romp and play and shout like your brother"—don't—don't—don't from birth to death; with a system of dress which the Devil, himself, could not have excelled as a preventive to the wholesome physical activity that upbuilds strength.

That year, I remember, it was bustles and hoops; pretty nearly as effective as Chinese foot bindings or harem hobbles on healthful activity. The next year, it was sleeves the size of a balloon. The next year, what in the name of folly was it? Oh, yes, the Grecian bend, when a woman was supposed to walk as if she had a break in the middle. The next fad was trains to sweep up the excreta and filth of the streets. Then came false busts, false hair, rats and things from the scalps of people who had died of nameless diseases in China. Last has come the fad of dresses that

actually hobble the feet. Chinese women have thrown off the foot-hobblings. Western women have assumed them. Why? That is the kind of thing makes me believe in a laughing, cynical personal devil. That is why I always regard stupidity as more criminal and damning than sin. The best art is the art that conceals art. The best dress is the dress that conceals dress, that draws attention away from the body wearing the dress to the personality inside the dress.

From that night, when I realized that stupidity, sheer stupidity, thick-headed stupidity and nothing else, had wrecked my life, and not God, health for women became a fetish with me. Dress for me became the means to an end; and the end was redundant energy and health. I have tried to dress as a means to an end, not to make myself a servant to my dress. I don't think I have ever been pointed out as either well dressed or poorly dressed. I have some rich friends, who are horribly sorry that I don't pay more attention to dress. They tell me what I might accomplish if only I would pay more attention to what they call "make-up"; but, all the same, I notice every once in so often they ask me how it is my life is so full and theirs so empty; how it is I have so and so and such and such for friends,

whom they would give their souls to know. I cannot answer; for they would not understand. They have staked their all on appearances, the show of things, the frills and furbelows, on earning $50,000, and giving the impression they were earning $500,000. I have staked my all on the character of the people inside the frills and furbelows; and where I have found we were fighting for the same ends, that fact alone has bound us together in "hoops of steel." Don't think by this that I went in for the zoneless waist and the slattern eccentric and the pose of indifference to dress, which is the greatest pose of all. I didn't. Art is the art that conceals art. Dress is the dress that conceals dress.

From that night, when I realized that my blockheaded, stupid indifference to the sacred claims of the body had wrecked my life, I simply made dress subservient to the one end, redundant, active, fiery physical health. What didn't play in with that scheme I cut out. I weighed less than one hundred pounds then and measured five feet nine. I weigh to-day uniformly between one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds; and I don't think there is an ounce of it that is fat, or an ounce of it that is not nervy muscle all alive. How did I accomplish it? By setting myself

to accomplish it; by realizing that no woman can fulfil her destiny, especially if that destiny be the human race, unless she first acquire physical fitness, strength, verve, rebound, all-aliveness. Then, I arose so dead at 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning that I needed a siren whistle and a steam derrick to get me up. If I missed sleep, or meals, I was all in. To-day, I can rise at 4 o'clock as easily as 5 or 6, and work till midnight, and get up ready for it the next day; and I have tramped twenty-five miles with Swiss guides and gone mealless thirty-eight hours, and come up with a rebound after one night's sleep. How have I accomplished this? By setting myself to do it; by learning that I could accomplish nothing unless I did do it, that the body is God's as much as the soul, and that electric power can accomplish nothing without a good power house.

I could not confide in my mother; for she was secretly bearing anxiety enough of her own. Nor could I confide in my little friend of the sweet peas and violet eyes. She would have wept and told me, "yes"; that was always what happened when a woman tried to do anything. She would have given me the tenderest sympathy, suffocating, smothering sym-

pathy, but not the lift, the spur, the fire I needed to come back fiercely at the game of life. It was a good thing there was no one to help me at that time. Otherwise, I could not have come to as complete and personal a realization of all the difficulties that confront the woman wage-earner.

That very night I began vigorous gymnastics to throw out my chest; and I never missed a hot plunge bath at night to stimulate surface circulation and warm up cold hands and feet, which so often give the "lunger" a nightly sore throat. Then, in the morning, came a cold sponge to avoid chills from draughts. I hadn't yet come to chasing the cure in fresh air, day and night. That followed after I had dosed myself for a year with codliver oil, and beef, iron and wine, and other nostrums, that lift you temporarily and let you fall back the moment you drop them.

That night, when I opened the Bible to read to my mother before she fell asleep, the first verse my eye fell on was: "With long life will I satisfy him." I didn't know whether to laugh or stamp. Instead, I sat thinking. Then, I wrote along the margin, "I'm going to test out if this thing holds water."

It is twenty years since I wrote those words.

The page is yellowed; and the penciling is faint; but if there were room, I should pencil another verse along the margin of these words, a line from Emerson: "For nature ever faithful is to such as trust her faithfulness."

A week later, I left for the East, only to learn that you can never run away from yourself, from the shadow of what you have done. I went to stay with a cousin some thirty years my senior. She was married, but had no children, and had always been to us something between a comrade and a second mother. She was married to a man notorious as the richest and meanest citizen in that state. That, everybody knew; but whether the general public knew that, in addition to being the richest and meanest man in the state, he was also a criminal I was not sharp enough to discern.

He had been married three times. His former wives had died of what the doctors diagnosed as anæmia in one case; heart disease in the other; but I had not been in the house a month before I knew and my cousin practically acknowledged that both women had died of wife-murder, the kind of murder that the law cannot or will not reach and punish. To one wife he had refused medical care and a

nurse in child-birth. The child died. The woman died a year later from the results of the neglect suffered at that time. The other woman he literally badgered to her death.

I set down these hideous facts because I have known many girls who thought they were too frail to earn their living out in the world choose this as "the easiest way." My observation of life is that, of all the ways of earning a living, this is the most tragically hard, and not the less cruel because it is dumb behind a brass knocker with large lettering of respectability. I saw that this man stood in deadly fear of my cousin's high-spirited fearless character, and that he hated her with a hatred that was virulent because he could not break her to cringe in fear before him, as he had broken her predecessors. He also hated her goodness as a standing reproach to his own vile life. I have seen him rave through the house at night foaming at the lips, declaring there was no such thing as a good woman in the world if only you could find out. After these frenzies, he would have fits of terrible penitence, when he would donate a hundred dollars to the Salvation Army, or Children's Home, or Church, which he attended as assiduously as the foremost saint.

"The man was insane," you say; or "a

husky son's number eleven boot would have tempered such frenzies." Granted he was insane; or that, pathologically, his was a case for a number eleven boot! The point is—why are girls not told the physical facts underlying the pathological need for a number eleven boot? Didn't this woman give this man's life a false front to the whole world, and so make him a menace to the community? After all, his raving brutality broke against her calm strength like storm-tossed waves against rocks; but I knew if ever her health, which was of the frailest, broke, he would get her as he had caused the deaths of the other two. I once asked my cousin why she had married him. She looked thoughtfully into space.

"What else was there for a girl to do thirty years ago?" she asked quietly. She had been a clergyman's daughter. When her father died, another clergyman, who was a relative, had invested her means for her so securely that she could not pull a cent out of the investment for ten years. "What was there to do? He caught me as such men always catch a woman, at her weakest moment. You know about that investment. He had heard of it, from the M.'s! He was looking for some one to give an air of respectability to his wealth.

I was looking for a home, so it happened."

"So you gave him the stamp of respectability, which is a lie," I said; "and he gave you a home."

"Yes," she added quickly, "but don't you ever think for one moment that respectability is all such men demand from their wives. I thank God I have had no children to carry the taint of such a disposition and of such perversion on down the generations; but if I had had a family of twenty girls, and every one was to inherit twice the fortune he has, I would have had each girl educated so she could earn her living if she needed to. Economic independence is the only security for girls from such a life as I have had."

"Why don't you leave him?" I asked. I knew the money had at last come home from its long investment. "You would not think of living with a negro who had been guilty of the sort of things this man has. You would not live with a man who had smallpox. Don't you see you are giving him a false stamp of respectability when he is really a criminal! What if anything had befallen So and So? (A young woman, who had lived in the house several years as lady's companion.) Why don't you divorce him? He has given you ample and repeated cause."

If my cousin had shorn her reasoning of every adventitious consideration, she would probably have answered in three words—Bread and Butter; but she gently rebuked me.

"My dear," she said, reproachfully, "do you realize that of all our numerous connection of relatives, there has never been a single case of divorce? I could not endure the slur and the gossip and public scandal. At first, when matters were worse, I once consulted ——" naming a great lawyer. "He assured me that a divorce and alimony would be granted in ten minutes hearing; but when I told my husband, he showed such repentance that I thought, perhaps," she was speaking very thoughtfully and slowly now, "perhaps it was my mission to stay with him and try to reform him!"

(There it was again—a duplication of my own stupidity; ascribing our blunders to the Will of God, who must needs have broad shoulders to carry the load of fool plans gone askew, which we ascribe to Him!)

"Been thirty years, hasn't it?" I asked.

"I know—I know," she answered impatiently. "I belong to the old morality and you belong to the new; and the new way of looking at things is turning our old standards all topsy-turvy; and the more I think of it, the less I know which is right. You think it worse

for a good woman to live with a bad man and wrap her skirts of respectability round his crimes, yes, crimes, crimes and diseases, than for a woman to leave such a man. You may be right, child; you may be right," she said sadly, "but I have stood it for thirty years; and it can't last long."

It didn't. One of the ways this man annually disported himself was each fall to refuse to lay in the supply of winter's coal till half the household had colds. This year, unwonted cold raw wet weather came early in August. My cousin took ill. Her husband stormed at the disarranged household, and refused to send for the doctor. I, personally, went down and brought the doctor up from the city. It was pleuro-pneumonia, with the same old symptoms of the same old good-for-nothing lungs, that tainted the clan of us. I wish you could have seen that husband evince his grief before the doctor.

"There is no use talking," declared that doctor. "No matter what people say, Mr.—— has the deepest reverence and love for your cousin."

"Then, I wish you'd make him put it in the

form of a check, and send her to Such and Such Sanitarium!" I retorted.

"I will," said the doctor; and he did.

I nursed my cousin through that illness, and saw her off for the Sanitarium with her deeply grieved and attentive husband. Then I went to bed myself with a high fever, a cough, and the upper half of one lung badly affected.

I forget what they called it, pneumonia, or congestion. It doesn't much matter. It was just a desperate sickness of the game called Life; and finding my cousin also in a cul-de-sac, up against a blind wall like myself, had a curious effect upon me.

As this is the last place my cousin will come into this narrative, I may as well finish with her case. Three years later, when there was no one in the house to force the buying of the coal and to see that she had medical care, she had another attack of pneumonia, swift and severe. I happened to be East, and received a telegram saying: "My beloved and darling wife passed to her Redeemer this morning."

As my cousin had told me how she wished some small property arranged, I took the first train and was in the house in five hours. The words that greeted me were: "You need not have come! I would have seen that her property went to her relatives."

"You need not distress yourself about her property," I retorted. "I have my cousin's will, and as it does not leave as much as a hairpin to you or to myself, we need not create a scene over her dead body." I was longing to take him by the throat, to flay him alive, to expose his life-long crimes, to cease this woman-cowardice trick of compounding a felony with crime. A look of jaundiced green fear went over his face. He began sucking his breath through his lips; and I never hear man or woman do that but I look down to see the hawk's talon fingers of a miser. His hands were literally crippled with clutching so.

"Come upstairs with me," I said, "I want to carry out what she wished me to do."

We searched her desk, her papers, the magazines on the table at the head of the bed, for the letter of last instructions, which she had always told me she would write. Then I called up the maid. Up to this point, I could not let myself look at the calm beautiful dead face on the pillow. I didn't want to be guilty of sheer murder in the presence of the dead. It was the first time that I had ever witnessed a woman legally murdered, by a man.

"Tell me exactly how my cousin died," I said.

The maid gave a terrified look at the evil old man now bent over trembling, clutching and unclutching the claw-like finger nails in the palms of his hands.

"Go on," I ordered. "Don't mind Mr.——! I'm after the truth!"

"She took sick, three days ago," began the girl doggedly. "I sent for the doctor, as you told me to do if ever she was sick. The doctor ordered a nurse——"

"I couldn't get the nurse ordered by Dr. Arnoldy," broke in the old man, beginning to weep and whimper.

"I sat up with her the first two nights! Then I think she wanted me to leave the room so she could write the letter to you."

"What letter?"

The old man was now bent across the brass bar at the foot of the bed trembling so he could scarcely stand. "I haven't it, so help me God, I know nothing about it," he babbled.

"She must have gone out of her head with the fever," went on the girl. "I heard her walk across the floor to the table where the ice water stood. There was a crash, she must have tripped. We lifted her up. Her mind was wandering, she kept calling and calling the names of yez all. We laid her back on the bed—and—and——" the girl began sobbing

hysterically, "when I came back from calling him she was dead."

The guilty old creature had fled down the stair to the library, where I heard him tramping up and down like a caged jungle beast, raving and railing and calling terms of endearment to the wife whom his neglect and vices had killed.

The maid and I began a search for that letter. I went over the desk and papers and the magazines on the table at the head of the bed. Then we lifted her head from the pillow; there we found it, hidden between the pillow slip and the pillow, evidently to be posted by stealth when he was not looking, the saddest letter that I have ever read. It asked that my mother and a favorite sister of mine should come and be with her at the end. Then, it gave me directions. On no account was I to stir up a scandal by exposing him, not for her sake, but for the sake of the innocent victims to whom, it came out afterward, she had ministered with money all her life; but I was not to leave as much as a hairpin of her possessions in the house of this evil old man.

I was trembling, when I had finished reading the letter, trembling because of what I dared not do. There lay the dead white face serene

and at rest at last, one of the most queenly faces that I have ever seen! So this was the end of the old morality. So this was what many a deluded girl, and many a deluded mother, and not a few muddy-headed dramatists and writers regarded as "the easiest way." "The Easiest Way!" I laid my face beside the dead face of my cousin, and kissed the lonely brow, and laughed because I dared not weep. So this was the house of the richest man in the city; of the richest man in the State, to whom philanthropies and charities and churches came begging with slathering flattery! Why, when my cousin married that man, she was cut dead for years by women who had angled for him for their daughters; and he had been sued for breach of promise and the claimant had received heavy damages. "The Easiest Way!" I wish every girl, who has that idea of the easiest way, had been with me in that house for the next three days! "The Easiest Way!" I must not disinter the old scandals that would smirch the innocent; but I would see that he did not have the Easiest Way for the next few days I was to be in the house. I heard the hall clock chiming noon. When I started downstairs, the servant was softly tapping the luncheon gong. I kissed the dead hand. "I'll do what you

want," I told her, "but it's hard. Will good women not only wrap their skirts of decency round guilt when they are alive, but protect crime when they are dead?"

He must have heard me coming, for he fled from the library to the dining room, where I suppose he thought that the maid serving luncheon would restrain my speech. It didn't! I saw him squirm and glance at me from his place with eyes of searching terror. Animals have no such guilt in their faces. Why have human beings? What had her letter told? He held me off by saying an extraordinarily long grace. Then, he detained the servant over the soup, over the fish, over a dozen fool-trifles.

"You can go, Louie," I said.

Then, I rose and went round to where he was sitting. He was trembling; and the trembling of a guilty and obscene and diseased old age has something hideously, horribly pathetic in it. Though I loathed him with a loathing that was almost murderous in its hate, I could not help but pity this withered old rotten leaf trembling on a rotten stem. But the pity did not stop me. I leaned over, and I took him by the shoulder with a grasp that was almost a

strangle-hold, and I bent down to say it right into his ear so that he could never pretend even to himself that his deafness had not heard.

"I want to read this letter of your dead wife to you," I said very slowly and distinctly.

"Don't! don't!" he pleaded as if to fend me off.

"It will be comforting for you to remember, afterward, in the long, lonely evenings, in the long, lonely years," I shouted in his ear.

Slowly, word by word, I read into his ear that sad farewell letter, the more damning in its indictment because it did not utter an accusation, but only shielded him from the disgrace of his own deeds. When I began to read, he had covered his face with his hand. His trembling became convulsive. He sank sprawling and cowering over the table, sobbing aloud. I bent the closer and read the clearer. When I finished, he was not sobbing. He was screaming in convulsive contortions like a maniac.

"You had better go up to your bed," I said.

And I sat down alone in the desolate house of the richest man in a rich city; of the richest man in a rich State! So this was the Easiest Way. I could stomach none of its dainties;

nor find any of the Ease of the Way. I have passed through some desperately hard places in the earning of a living, as any man or woman who takes big odds must—but none as hard and long as the thirty years of this dead woman's easiest way.

I may say that the gentleman kept his bed till the day of the funeral, when the wreaths and messages and friends began streaming in. Then, he posed as the properly bereaved husband. In the services, where the clergyman began praying "for the bereaved husband," he rose and broke from the room in a paroxysm of grief. He secluded himself in a den, where he wrote a poem on the beauties of his wife's character. This he had printed the next day in the city paper. He had it reprinted as a circular, and sent us a great many copies of it. To my personal knowledge, he afterward proposed to four members of our somewhat big family clan; but his wealth never succeeded in buying a fourth victim.

As far as we as a clan were concerned, the decrees of the old morality had passed forever. We didn't consider that sanctimony larded with other money could sanctify wife murder; and I'm proud of womanhood in general to relate that though he proposed broad-

cast up to the hale old age of ninety-six, at which he died, he never succeeded in buying a fourth victim. I called his old age a hale ninety-six. I did not call it a happy old age. He lived twenty years after my cousin's death in a loneliness that I can describe only as a quarantine. He died intestate; though he had heirs enough under the bar sinister whom my cousin had supported as long as she lived.

To go back to the story, where I lay in a high fever with a cough and half one lung badly affected, while my cousin and her loving husband went off to the sanitarium; finding my cousin in the same cul-de-sac as myself had a curious effect on me. Her case was so much more terrible than mine; so much more desperate and hopeless, that the whole situation gave me a sort of reckless fever. If I had only a few more years to live, by jingo, I'd fill them full! I'd rush life like a half-back on a football field; and, if I had to die, I'd go down spinning, not whining.

It is wonderful what a world of kinship suffering unlocks, which otherwise would have remained behind locked doors. After Dr. Arnoldy had gone thoroughly over me, he sat down and began idly skimming through Marie

Baskirtsheff's Memories and a new brochure by Nietzsche, which were lying on the bedroom table.

"Like this kind of thing?" he asked.

"It isn't a case of liking or disliking! When I read I want to get hold of truth, that can't be shot through. I want a guide to life."

"When you find it, loan it to me, will you?" he laughed. "I've been looking for that same thing for fifty years; and, like Browning, I've only been able to grasp at its garment's hem, I've never really got a good look at the lady's face." He sat looking at me. "What made you come to this house?" he asked.

"The doctor ordered me to come East and rest."

"Rest, yes; but did he know you were coming to a house, where your cousin was in the incipient stage of a chronic tuberculosis?"

"I didn't know that myself! I thought she had lungs as we all have."

"Yes, but in the case of a woman over fifty, it may be slow. She may with care last for years. The same with you at your age in your highly strung condition might go, quick as that," he snapped his fingers.

"Look here, doctor, if I have only a short time, I am going to rush it! I'm going to jump at life."

"Bully for you," he burst out. "You couldn't do anything better calculated to keep you alive and kicking; only you must be out of this house on the quick! If anything happened to you here, it would break your cousin's heart. She would blame her condition for your death." Then he leaned over and told me his secret, he had an incurable malady and did not want it known because he wished to increase his life insurance to provide for the education of his sons. "You are not in as bad a fix," he said. "You have an even running chance."

I sat bolt upright in bed. "Have I an even chance?" I asked.

"You bet you have; but you must do one of two things. Either go to Germany and try these new tuberculin cures; or go back to the high dry Western plains and all the year round, forty below or ninety in the shade, day and night, summer and winter live an out-door life with some occupation that will take up every moment of your thoughts and keep you from worrying. Won't the old man put up the money to send you to Germany?"

I laughed out; but I did not tell him it was hard enough to induce "the old man" to put up money for the winter's coal. Nor did I tell him that of my four years' savings, less than

$10 remained, though I still had the return ticket.

"Only remember this," he warned as he was leaving, "you have to chase the cure joyously. No tears! No dances! No night concerts! No church! No anything where other people are assembled and you breathe vitiated air."

"And remember," he called back from the door, "no back thoughts! No dumps! No doldrums! No peevish self-pity! That will dump you as far back in a week as the fresh air will hoist you ahead in a month."

"Good luck, doctor," I called, as he passed through the door. I knew from his malady that I could never again see him alive.

"Oh, that's all right," he laughed bravely. "I fight to lose; but you may fight to win if you have horse sense and gumption and cast out the devils of peevish ego, that dominate most pampered girls of nineteen."

I sat upright in bed, thinking after he had gone. Considering the terrible suffering entailed in the nature of his malady, I think he was the bravest man I have ever known, the way he fronted the foe that day and spurred me up to the fight. "Horse sense and gumption!" What were they, I wondered! "Cast out the devils of peevish ego, that dominate

most pampered girls of nineteen!" Those imps, I would go after hammer and tongs. I knew them well both in myself and others. I sprang out of bed on my feet, though the room reeled round and a leaden stifling nausea rested on my chest. I took a strychnine tablet and enough port wine to drown a drunkard, and sat down on the edge of the bed till the room stopped running round in blurred circles. Then, I dressed and took a four mile walk up hill till I was knock-kneed with fatigue, when I took the car back. That night I asked the maid to help me get my trunk out of the lumber room. In the bottom of the trunk was a perfect library of books on how to write English—March's huge tome of six hundred pages, French and Alvord and Crabb's Synonyms and the rest, some twenty volumes. I had not wanted to spend my summer in enforced idleness, and had brought them along for surreptitious study.

How trivial and picayune and absurdly piddling and far away from reality they looked in the face of this impending thing called Death across my path! What did it matter whether we said "shall" or "will"; "begin" or "commence"; whether we split our infinitives, or duplicated our "of's" or mixed our tenses, or ruptured our plurals, or stood the

whole English language on its head, so that we but expressed what we meant, and lived our lives, and stood for plus? I fingered the pages curiously where I had marked this, that, and the other rule. Why did college lore feed us on such sawdust and shavings, when what we wanted, all of us, was not rule-mongering on formalities, but the life beneath the forms; life, more life, knowledge of how to live? Wasn't language always like the molten metal flowing from the blast furnace to take form in the world of the thought behind it? So that the fires burned hot enough and melted the hard metal to fluid fire, would not language always find its form best by the heat of the fires melting it to a living fluid?

I dumped the whole cargo of books except old Crabb's Synonyms and Webster's Unabridged into a big telescope suitcase. Between the books packed in excelsior had been some old brass and silver candlesticks and bric-à-brac heirlooms of European families gone to wreck in the West, which I had picked up at a trifle in an auction room, intending to have them cleaned as a present for my cousin. These, I dumped into the suitcase, too. Then, I rang up a messenger boy to carry the lot down to a pawn shop on the east side. On

the books for which I had paid $2 and $3 I realized about ten and fifteen cents apiece; and as the episode marked a revolution in my own attitude to culture, I think I realized more than they were worth in the sum total of life. On the old verdigris heirlooms for which I had paid only a few cents I realized almost $20 so does real life at the very outset transmute our schoolish values. I went out of the pawn shop about twenty pounds lighter and over $20 richer.

By taking the midnight train and traveling two nights and one day, I could make $10 and the return ticket cover my train journey. That left over $10. Was it wanton extravagance, or foolish headedness? I don't know; but life up to the present had been made a very joyous thing to me by good "pals." If it were only an even chance, if I might really go out like a snap of the fingers, I wanted them to have something to remember my love by. If I didn't go out like a snap of the fingers, I could easily earn money; earning money had never troubled me; so I went across the street and took each friend some insignificant trifle.

I took the midnight train for the Western Plains, the Long Way Home, the longest, hard-

est way I had yet traveled in life; for it was three years before I could call myself well. It was on the train that I met the greatest danger that can assail the life of a wage-earning girl.

CHAPTER VI

THE RESPECTABLE SIGN ON A BLIND PIG

The harshness of women in their judgments toward women, and the leniency of men in their attitude to men have become proverbial in all the literatures of all the ages. Why?

The old order took for granted that women were such saints we had a right to expect impeccable conduct from them; men were such weak and erring creatures they had learned to pave the way back to righteous conduct with charity, so long, of course, as they kept a decent front externally. Is this the true explanation of the difference in men's and women's judgments; or is it that men are juster because their judgment is founded on sounder knowledge of facts? Do women, like the blind goddess of justice, shut their eyes to facts; and then pronounce verdict?

"There is no excuse, there is absolutely no excuse," I have heard good women declaim, with the emphasis that mistakes ignorance for

evidence, "there is no excuse for any girl who behaves properly, and is careful, becoming mixed up in an affair"; the word "affair" being uttered, as of something with the lid on and tons of respectability sitting on the lid, though that same word "affair" conceals more suffering to womankind and detriment to the human race than all the errors of intemperance and creed put together.

"What would you do if your daughter ran away with a man, who turned out to be a blackguard?" asked a Southern girl of her stately mother.

The mother looked as if anyone asking that question must be demented.

"Turn her from my door and tell her she was no daughter of mine."

Five years from the day the daughter had asked that question, precisely that fate befell her. When in her extremity she telegraphed two or three of us (collect at our end; for she had not a cent), the blackguard had squandered her money and deserted her with three young children. There was no use appealing to the mother. She was of the indurated type which mistakes arrogance over an insecure social position for virtue bulwarked by church and creed. When the little rat, whom I should hardly like to dignify with the name villain,

laid his crafty plans to get possession of the daughter's means and person, he had counted on that very quality in the mother acting as a bulwark of security and secrecy for himself; and I have heard lawyers, who handled similar cases, say that such types of criminals invariably choose their victims among the higher-ups, where family pride will outweigh outraged justice. Anyway, we didn't appeal to this mother. She would only have hardened under appeal. We talked it over and tried her on another tack. There are always game good sports among leaders of women secure enough in their own position not to need a policeman's bludgeon. It's your half-way-ups, your grand duchesses of the half-baked, your tom-peepers over the social fence and chimney corner gossips over the social column, and social slugs on the under side of the board, and social parasites on whom you can always depend to play the Judas with the kiss that betrays. We were lucky in having such a game good friend for this woman now. Never mind what we did! She took the situation in with a sense of the humorous, which most women lack, and extended, not her patronage, but her prestige to the deserted wife. In a trice, without any appeal, taking unction to herself for a deal of

generosity and with a reinforced edition of the Ten Commandments, the mother came on the run to the rescue. She wore the air of one with a magnanimity not to be measured. In reality, she was in a panic at finding herself out of the procession of her own infinitesimally insignificant social world.

"The very idea of any girl taking such treatment from a husband at this late date in the world's history," said a woman famed for her charm; and yet when guest after guest of this woman's circle has had to shy off; when not a few of her friends have had to leave her home with terrible swiftness, and silence because of love for her, when the kindest thing they ever did was to leave without telling why, her bitter diatribes against them knew no bounds; and she lauded her polygamously-minded and diseased old spouse to the seventh heaven as a model of virtue. It may have been Mohammedan virtue. It wasn't Saxon; though I never heard a man spout so much virtue in so short a time. Why were her judgments so harsh to innocence; so blind to guilt, black as the hangman's mask? Was it another case of earning a living "the easiest way"? Was it bread and butter?

"You are the most just woman I have ever known in your judgments of other women," I once remarked to the head of a large training school for nurses.

She looked at me almost startled. "You are the only person, who ever noticed that in me," she said. She sat thinking as she sorted the files of applicants, "When a man does wrong, horrible, hideous wrong, no woman connected with him by blood or marriage cares to acknowledge herself a jewel in a swine's snout." She went on sorting the files. "If ever you use this in your writing, will you promise me to disguise it so people can't recognize me?"

I promised. She sent the two orderlies out of the room. "When I was fourteen, I had to leave home. There is no use going into details. My father was a country doctor. When he married a second time, we of the first family had to scatter. The only position I could find was a sort of office help with an old doctor, a friend of my father's in our little Middle Western town. As long as I live, I'll never forget the kindness of that man's wife to me: yet she must look on me as the most ungrateful being. I could not tell her. She used to watch the office so I could go to the night school; and both the doctor and his wife, who were childless, used to refer to me as their

daughter. I was too happy to have found a refuge for words to express. The old doctor never interested me much. He was a fluffy whiskered Father Christmas sort of man with a declining practice; and I used to wonder if he drank, or secretly used a drug. Looking back, I think I was really a little afraid of him, there was something familiar about him that was never jovial; but what could a girl do thrown out of her own home at fourteen?

"Once, I had a very sore throat, wet feet from spring slush. He asked me to come to his inner office to have my throat examined; now you will know why I try to be just in my judgments of women! Just by chance he let the yale lock snack; but I didn't think much of that; for I was in a fever, and he was patting my arm saying how he wouldn't have anything happen to me for all the world. I was their little daughter, their comfort and joy and all that. I thought he meant it just as it sounded, I did not know there is no age limit; what girl going out in the world for the first time can know that? I can't tell you what put me suddenly on guard, in fact, filled me with terror, something evil and leering and shiny and terrible on his face. What if hard lines had not sharpened my wits so that I saw that? What if I had been what many a young girl is, what

God meant all young people to be, a sunbeam dancing into life? I would not have seen it. I would have gone over the edge into the abyss. I sprang from the chair panting, choking with terror. He waved at the door as much as to say, 'It's locked,' and seized both my wrists.

"Just then, the telephone rang furiously in the outer office, and his wife rapped sharply on the door. His face went black; he became purple. 'I'll get you yet,' he muttered. As he threw the door open to his wife, what do you think his words were, in the softest, suavest voice, 'Just a touch of tonsilitis: keep our little girl in bed till I see her in the morning.'

"I was stunned. I was speechless. I was utterly confused. If I had screamed out the truth, I would have been branded from that house an outcast. I don't think that woman had the faintest idea what a blackguard, what a criminal, what a crafty fiend her husband was! What I did was to go into screaming hysterics of weeping. Do you know it was that man who carried me upstairs with the tenderest terms of fatherly endearment; and he insisted on laying ice packs on my forehead and spine; yes, and I may as well tell you the whole truth, though it strangles and nauseates me to the pit of my stomach yet, before he

went down to the patient who had rung up so vociferously, he kissed me good-night. Then, he left some tablets for his wife to give me.

"I was afraid they were drugged. I could only lie weeping and moaning and refusing to take them, and wondering if God had gone to sleep or died! Then, I threw my arms round his wife's neck, she had been so good and tender with me, and begged her to leave the room so that I could sleep. She must have thought me the most ungrateful little beast.

"I lay in the dark trying to think what to do! Think how many hundreds of thousands of young girl wage-earners have lain in a deeper dark with no way out, trying to think what to do! Will no great strong organization of women ever arise to shield and protect and defend such as these; where the arm of the big sister, the rich and the strong and the capable will be round the poorest and the meanest and the most helpless of all the world's little sisters? I often think that is what Christ meant when He said—'Feed my sheep! Feed my lambs.' What is so helpless and defenceless and stupid as a sheep, or a lamb? Only one thing, a woman thrown on the world with no qualifications to meet it; a girl thrown on her own resources before she has any, physical or mental? Men have their labor unions, their

political clubs, their lodges. What bond of union or defence has the army of millions of wage-earning girls?

"To make a long story short, I could not go home. I could not tell. That is what such blackguards count on. If I told, what would the average woman do? She would draw her skirts aside and say there must be something wrong with the girl, or no man would take liberties——"

"What would the average man do?" I interrupted.

"Pity the girl and try to take some of the liberties if he were only an average; help her if he were above the average," she answered.

"In the city of Buffalo lived a second cousin of mine. If I could only reach her, she might let me act as a help till I could learn nursing, or stenography, or something; but I could not stay in that house even till daylight. I dressed in the dark, waited till everything was quiet and slipped down the back stairs in my stocking feet. In the palm of my mitt I had my earnings of three months, less than twenty dollars. Now what I ask myself is this: what if I had had no money to pay my way to Buffalo? What if I had had no cousin to go to? What if I had fallen into the hands of cadets and pimps

when I reached Buffalo? Remember I was not fifteen; and it was only by chance that I asked a decent policeman which car to take to my cousin's.

"Any impostor could have represented himself as my cousin's son or husband. I had never been in a city before in my life. That is why I keep asking myself will no organization of Big Sisters ever put out the drag net to catch the Little Sisters who are trapped for the abyss? In hospital work here we see it every day. It is untellable." She leaned forward covering her face with her hands. "It is almost unthinkable. Are the Powers that make for Righteousness asleep; for, if they are, rest assured the Powers that make for Evil never sleep? If I had not come so near to it all myself, perhaps I should not feel it like a knife when I see girls that are mere children, girls that ought to be playing with their dolls, carried in here maimed and torn by the unhunted Beasts of our human Jungle." Her voice had sunk almost to a whisper. "I have heard of farmers who offered bounties for wolves that destroy sheep. Are there no bounties for these wolves of our city streets? Yet almost the last words Christ said were to care for the most defenceless of all, the scattered sheep.

"I told my cousin everything. I'll never for-

get the advice she gave me. She was a plain, hard, sensible woman; life had been her teacher. It was just the sort of brace I needed: 'Look here, Julie,' she said; 'the trouble with girls like you is you don't know any trade, or craft, or job. *As long as you don't know any special thing, you've got to take the leavings of other people's jobs.* You've got to live by-the-leave, or if-you-please from somebody else. If your boss is kind, it's all right. If he's too kind and you are young and good-looking, it's dangerous. *It's my observation you are much surer of decent treatment if people daren't be indecent.* The trouble with you was you didn't know any special job. You had to live by that old skezik's special favor, and that let down the five-barred gate that every girl ought to keep between herself and strangers. First thing you do is finish your high school; then learn a special job.'

"It was she who set me to nursing; but what I ask myself is this, what would I have done if I had had no cousin? I could not have gone to the local clergyman. What would my word have been against the word of a deacon? I was a nobody. If I had opened my mouth, it would have marked me for all time in that little town."

"Exactly what would you have done?" I asked.

She looked straight at me and never hesitated. "I would have done what thousands of friendless girls do after a hungry week or two; I would have gone to hell; and ended in a hole in the river. Oh, believe me," she said, laying her hand on my arm, "*such girls, as I might have been, take terrible toll of good women's lives for what the good leave undone* for such as I almost became. Do you know what I mean?" she said.

"You are speaking as a nurse now?" I asked.

"As a nurse in a surgical clinic for rich women," she said; "and that is why I try to be as just to women, as men are to men."

If one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, like the head nurse of the training school, right here and now I got that touch in one of life's sledge hammer bumps. I learned that all women workers in the home and out of it are fellow comrades, fellow strugglers, who pull forward or back, or worst of all, hold women's progress stationary; which means arrested development, rust corroding the unused blade of effort, blue mould on the brain, palsy to the sword-hand that should strike straight and direct, and to the soul, the dry-rot of a mum-

mied death. I learned that charity must be all-embracing as life is all-testing, not one of us escapes, high or low, rich or poor; *and mene, mene, tekel, upharsin,* who shall say by what counterpoise we are weighed in the balance and found wanting?

I knew I was a wage-earner. We all were; but I did not regard myself as belonging to the great mass of wage-earners. In fact, those words masses and classes had not much meaning for us in that new West. The carpenter of yesterday became the contractor of to-day and the millionaire of to-morrow. We of the university took credit to ourselves for not kowtowing to the dollar sign; but we were, perhaps, the worst snobs of all, I mean intellectual snobs, who mistook culture for an end in itself, instead of a means to the broadening and filling of existence with life.

I know now that many a man who never saw inside our books was gathering more culture, more of the knowledge that is power, from the Great Book of Life, than we could cram from all the printed pages of college lore. The man who to-day controls the entire railway and steamship system of Eastern territory was at that time working as a stone-mason on a city bridge. Of the five men, who own the majority

stock in three transcontinental railroads one was splitting rails in the woods at $1.25 a day; another was a bridge contractor; a third kept an outfitting store; a fourth ran a river ferry; a fifth was a train dispatcher. The man who to-day owns the richest holdings in Klondike was so flat under the collapse of the boom that no one thought he could ever crawl out. The biggest copper magnate of the two Mexicos and Arizona was on the job very quietly among us as mining engineer at $50 a month; and a young fellow, since famous, just out of Columbia Mining School, who afterwards became the dominant force in Montana and Idaho mines and branch railroads, was working in blue jeans near our city in the most impossible gold mines ever discovered, all pyrites or "fool gold"; so that we didn't really understand those foolish, meaningless words "masses" and "classes," which are bandied about with such bitterness to-day by snobocracy and anarchy.

We didn't understand what the anarchists inculcate as "class consciousness"; the upstarts as "exclusiveness." We were all on the hustle. Those who made good went up and were received into the circle of the worthwhiles. Those who didn't were left alone and

like the swine of Holy Writ went promptly over the cliff to oblivion. We had no fault to find with the social system. We hadn't time; so while I was a wage-earner and rejoiced in work, I did not realize that I was one of an army of seven million unconsciously carrying out an economic revolution.

I did not realize that what would hurt one would injure all. I did not dream that one of my upbringing could be menaced by the dangers, say, that menace a little girl working in a laundry, or behind a counter. If the little laundry girl got smashed in the wheels of life, why, of course, I and all my shoddy kind would pull the mangled remains off the wheels with kid gloves and put them in an ambulance to be carted where they take care of mangled lives. If a little mill girl fell over the edge of the city's cesspools of vice, to be sure I and all my kind would fish her out at the end of a forty-rod pole, and disinfect our fishing tackle, and pass by on the other side. That I or my kind could get mangled on the wheels, that hands could reach up out of the cesspools and clutch at us I neither knew; nor, if I had known, would I have believed. It was while going home with the doctor's death-warning humming in my head that I got my lesson.

At the train seeing me off on the health quest to the West that midnight was one of the lame-ducks of the connection, who had been ruined by the collapse of the boom. He was desperate for money; and he had a family to support. "By George," he said, "I envy you going back West. I was a fool to have come East again. If I had the money, I'd light out for the West on a blind chance quick as that," snapping his fingers. He was a man to whom far-off fields always looked green. There was always some lucky turn of fortune's wheel which he could grasp if only he had a little money; and, in days of prosperity, when he had money, he threw it to the winds in the wildest dissipation.

"Look here," I said, "if you had another chance, do you think you could keep from being a fool?" He said what such men always say in such cases. He didn't think; he knew. Just give him the chance.

(It may be mentioned here that the people who ask for chances aren't the people who make any use of them. The men who know how to use a chance are the men who know how to create that chance.)

"How much money do you need to go West?" He told me. "All right! I'll get it for you." You see I hadn't quite got rid of

that old belief that all I had to do was to tap God, and I'd get all I wanted.

"The trouble with you was," said an old frontiersman, to whom I told the whole episode, "you thought you could boost a person externally. You can't. It's got to be done internally. If you have to boost a person up to the scratch in the first place, you'll have to keep kicking him up to the scratch all along afterwards, and life hasn't time for that. If you want to help, give a man's soul a different slant; then, he'll work out his own salvation."

The sleeping car was crowded. By some mistake in the assignment of berths, I had an upper. Everybody was in bed except an old gentleman who had boarded the train at the station. He introduced himself and addressed me by name. "President ——— of the University told me about you," he said. "I'm Mrs. So-and-So's brother."

Mrs. So-and-So was a bulwark of church and society in our city, and an intimate of my own home. I instantly recognized a well-known Eastern financial promoter, notorious in our city for several spectacular speculations that had succeeded, but somewhat distrusted for other speculations that you could hardly call shady, but rather shaky. The heavy band of

crape on hat and overcoat sleeve vaguely recalled the story of a daughter about my own age, whom he had brought West for her health and then, against the doctor's orders, whisked off to Europe, where she had died. He kindly offered to exchange his lower berth for my upper; and I went to bed praying the hardest I had ever prayed for God to play down; not for this, that, or the other thing, but for an open way to the fore through the blind wall that seemed to encompass life. Others may have found out differently; but as far as I have gone I have never found that God opens the way, but rather does He give strength and agility for us to hew the way through the wall, or climb up over it, or circumscribe it.

Curiously enough, the occurrences of the next morning seemed almost a direct answer to those wild prayers; so readily do we read our desires of an ant-hill world into the great designs of the Universe Ruler. I wakened late; and when I went to the dining-car, by chance was shown to the table where the old gentleman of the night before sat. He rose as I said good-morning, gave some orders in an undertone to the head waiter, who knew him, and reseated himself opposite me.

I felt rather than saw the stare that grew

embarrassing. When I looked up, his eyes were full of tears.

"How old are you?" he asked, without a word of preliminaries. Then before I could answer, "And if I had not urged her to come home from the West, she might be alive yet."

The trend of his thought was too evident to need any explanation. I suppose it must have been the hectic coloring, or short breath, or general contour of face; but he had fancied a strong resemblance to his dead daughter; and his grief had unmanned him so that he had stayed on in the dining-car alone with the waiters. When I went to order breakfast, the waiter told me it had been specially prepared.

"You must let me," he said. He was sitting with his elbow on the table and his hand over his eyes. "You don't know, you are too young to know what it is to care for only one person in all the world, and to have that one person snatched from you and laid away in a foreign grave."

I was too amazed and confused for answer. The story came back to me in vague snatches to which I had paid no heed at the time, how this man had never agreed with the other members of his family. They had refused to come West with him. He spent his summers in the

West and his winters in Europe; but in the discordant life the dead girl had seemed to be the one exception. On her he had centered all his love and his joy. It must have been a selfish love at best; for it was his disregard of the doctor's orders in taking her away from the high dry air of the West to the fogs of London that had hastened her death. This we all knew in the vague hurried don't-care way of the West with its neighbors. Perhaps, that is one of the most striking differences between East and West. In the East everybody has known everybody else so intimately for generations that the slightest intrusion of the new produces a surprising resentment. In the West too many strangers are coming and going all the time for people to manage their neighbors' affairs. I would not have known these details of this man if his sister had not been a prominent woman in the city. When I looked up he had pulled himself together.

"You think it strange that I should talk this way with you; but when you entered the car last night in the half dark with that dry cough and quick breathing and huskiness in your voice, I could hardly believe it wasn't a year ago, when I took her East. Besides, I have just crossed the ocean with President ——— of your University. He told me how much your case re-

sembled my daughter's, the quick break, arrested development," then, he abruptly broke off, realizing what resemblance in the third stage might mean to me. Then, in a quick effort to cover his slip, "The President ——— told me he never had a student who mastered work so easily without knowing it."

"Oh, the President was throwing bouquets at himself," I said lightly. "He was a student when my grandfather was president."

"He said if your health had held out that he intended to pay your expenses for a post-graduate course abroad."

"As my college days are over, that isn't very much consolation."

"You will not go back?"

I shook my head.

"That's right! There is no use bucking life. If you do, it bucks you."

Later, when the waiters had cleared the tables, he tipped the head man off, smoked a cigar and told me about his daughter. He carried a miniature of her in the back of his watch; and I could see something of a resemblance to myself.

"You must not let yourself go as she did," he said. "What are your plans?"

"Plans!" I looked at him. "No plans; hustle, and hope, and die kicking!"

"Hustle, and hope, and die kicking," he repeated. "That wouldn't be a bad motto for all of us for the next few tight years. Those of us who come through alive will be wealthy; but it's a toss-up who is going to smash next. My own collections have been $2,000 a month short since I went to Europe. Young ———" (the son of the President of the University) "is my secretary; and I'm very uneasy about things. I'm very dissatisfied. When so many notes have to be extended, it would be very easy for payments to come in and yet not go down on the books. Half our accounts are extended from month to month. It would take an expert accountant six months to prove a mix-up. I can never feel quite sure where Billy's inborn inaccuracy merges into loop holes for dishonesty to back through."

"Why do you keep him, then?" I asked.

If I had been experienced and older, that question could have given me the keynote to the whole situation on the spot; and if he had answered frankly, it would have been to the effect that Billy knew too much to be fired; but he hemmed and hawed about the President being an old friend and Billy a harmless, well-meaning boy, though he himself had come West to change the whole system in his offices.

Afterwards, when we had gone back to the

pullman, I saw him across the aisle making a bluff of reading a newspaper upside down; all the while studying something in his own mind. Ants have their antennæ and humans their instincts, though we call ourselves sublimated donkeys when we trust those invisible feelers of the soul. I knew, though I would not let myself know what he had meant to convey in that reference to his business. Other travelers had gone to the observation car in the rear. He leaned across the aisle.

"See here," he said. "I have a plan! You have to work. I venture to say there isn't a family in the city where every member over sixteen won't try to do something this winter. Why can't you take this position? You'll find the offices the most sumptuously furnished west of Chicago."

(I did; and it has given me a distrust of sumptuous places and people ever since.) "Don't think I am offering you this out of pity, because you resemble my dear daughter! I'll admit that resemblance first drew me to you; but the fact is you need work and I need help. Here, if you doubt," he said, handing two advertisements clipped from the leading dailies of the state. They advertised for "a confidential secretary, salary $1,200 a year, bonds of $10,000 required and highest references."

I sat suddenly erect from the pillows. If ever an answer came to wild prayers, this was it, bolt out of the blue. I could hardly trust my voice; much less my own hopes. There were slight medical debts to be paid back East. There was that lame duck to be helped coming West. There was the home to be kept. There was money needed to let me have another stab at the zest of life. Surely, God was playing down, playing down!

"Mr. B———," I said. "There are three plain reasons against your plan. I know less of office work than you do of Hebrew. My health may go to utter punk in the cold weather; and I couldn't raise ten cents worth of bonds, let alone $10,000."

He laughed lightly and kindly. He was evidently a man not used to having magnanimity declined. "Let us take those reasons," he said. "I don't want a stenographer. I have one. Nor do I want a collector. We'll leave Billy on his job, the installments are coming due on land sales all over the State. Notes will have to be extended and settlers who are hard up tided past. Now what I want, when I have to go off to Europe, is some one who is honest to do my banking, to act as a check on the book-keepers and collectors, to take entire charge of receipts and disbursements, to whom I can give power

of attorney, who is honest but has brains enough to see that others are honest. I can be here only a few weeks, then must go abroad again. I am convinced that you can fill the position if it works in with your plans. As to your health, it is only at the month end, when payments are due or overdue, you will have long hours. At other times you will be required in the office only long enough to attend to the banking. If large payments come in after three o'clock, take them home with you. The bookkeepers and collectors have access to the safe; but I want no one to have access to my accounts but my secretary. As to the bonds ordinarily required, these are hard times all round: we'll waive that."

He asked me to have luncheon with him. I excused myself. He left the car. I lay back among the pillows like one drawn out of the depths by a lifeline, with a jubilate singing through my soul as in those childhood days, when I used to hum Proverbs over with my head under the bed-clothes. The sudden rebound from anxiety sent a positive glow of warm physical happiness through me. I was so relieved I could not thank God, words seemed too poor and small. I wanted to live

gladness and thanks, as I want to yet, when I know life's best and worst.

Now, understand two or three things distinctly, this man was kind. He was one of the kindest men I have ever known; but it was a kindness that made him doubly dangerous. However he may have been in business, and his finances were too devious to be followed by either a ferret, or a mole, in his personal relationships he did not designedly set out to do wrong. Some have an idea that the greatest dangers in life are from the branded criminal, the ink-black scoundrel. Believe me, as far as girl wage-earners are concerned, this is not the case. The branded sinner you know. The saint you know. You can always foretell exactly how they will act under given circumstances; but it is the half-way sort of person, part saint, part sinner, who flip-flops back and forward, over the line dividing right from wrong, who is the greatest menace in the world to youth.

This man was not a satyr rioting in lewdness. He was not the Minotaur painted in Watts' sermon-picture with the dead song bird in its claw. He was not the crafty villain of the stage; but he and his kind are a greater menace to youth than all three of these types together;

for you accept them on the grounds of decency and never find them twice in the same place. Scripture, you know, defines two types of swine, the swine that tramples the pearls under foot; the swine that wants to wear a jewel conspicuously in its snout.

This man had been drawn to me by the resemblance to his dead daughter. He spoke to me constantly in her name, as of doing for me what he would have done for her; as of compensating to me the loss his rashness had caused her. More courteous, chivalrous treatment I have received from no one; but it was tainted. When I had fathomed to the bottom of things, I was wanted for precisely the same purpose as my cousin, who married the richest, meanest man. I was to be the respectable sign on a blind pig. You remember Judas thought he could at once be both loyal and a neat bargainer in silver. It is the same in all life. Your greatest danger is not from open enemies. It is from tainted friends.

Meanwhile, I did not realize all this. So great was the relief from anxiety that I fell asleep from sheer happiness; and there came dreams, the strangest, weirdest dreams. I am neither a psychic nor a spiritualist; and yet, if I am to set down the facts, I have to acknowl-

edge here that out of some sublimated depths, which we have neither discovered nor explored, came warning and guidance and foreshadowing of the cardinal events in the next fifteen years of my life. I cannot relate these dreams here, they came too fast, like moving pictures across the film of the brain; and, after all, are they any more wonderful than the flashlight photography of life events covering many years on films less than a fourteenth of an inch in diameter, occupying in time less than a fraction of a second?

These experiences are so deeply concerned with the intimacies of the inner soul that we refuse to give them to the psychical societies as data: yet of such data must science take cognizance in the next few years. I shall relate only the briefest outlines of three of those dreams. They came in lightning flashes, literally chasing one another, as moving picture films come.

There was one of the little friend, who had given me the flowers, when I set out in life. She was at this time in perfect health, living in an Eastern city where the family had moved when the collapse struck the West. I saw her die so suddenly that it was not death, it was really a glad translation, a passing from the curtain of things we don't see to the real life

behind what we see. She lived for eight years after this time, and we often talked over that dream. She thought it portended some philanthropic work, she could never quite screw her resolution up to undertake. I thought it warned her of a weak young bank man, to whom she was engaged and who afterwards proved an absconder. It portended neither. It portrayed exactly what occurred eight years later, her end so swift and unexpected that it was more like translation than death.

Then, there was the old dream of the half-naked figure flying along the edge of the precipice with the wolves snapping at its heels. I saw the runner come bounding out of the mountain thicket and dash for safety into a fenced kraal such as ranchers construct in mountain clearings. Other figures were in the enclosure. A man fastened the gate in time to shut out the wolves. I looked again, white bordered vest, white whiskers, carefully pressed frock coat, restless, large, well-manicured, pudgy hands, the man was the well-known financial promoter, whom I had met on the train. Was the flying figure myself I wondered in my dream; but, even as I looked, the runner had skirted the fencing of the kraal, and bounded out over the far side up the mountain to a flowered Alpine meadow, where the voice of glad

waters disimprisoned from snow filled the sunlight with laughter.

There was another dream, from which I awakened panting, hot with exhaustion, and drenched. It was the child of long ago on the runaway horse going a mad pace, up a steep mountain trail, setting the rocks trembling and the hawks and black carrion vultures flackering up a-wing amid the funereal pines and hemlocks. The trail opened to an upper Alpine meadow, ripe, dead ripe, with the heavy-headed yellow wheat; but, instead of the self-binder of the prairie, the reaper was the white vestured and hooded figure of death with his scythe. Either the flacker of the vulture birds circling darkly overhead, or the strange hooded figure of the reaper, terrified the horse; for he carried the child at a gallop through the wheat field to green meadows girth-deep in the flaunting flowers of the Alpine heights; and on up where the voice of glad waters disimprisoned from snow filled the sunlight with laughter. There were details in this dream too startling and vivid to be given here. Didn't I dream that I dreamed these things, the sceptic may ask. So little did I dream that I dreamed them that penciled back on the yellowed leaves of those old Proverbs are the outlines of the dreams. A doctor who was a family friend

and acquainted with my ancestry tried once to explain it all as a case of mental, psychological throw-back to certain Welsh ancestors. He believed in psychologic as well as physical atavism. Though I lived only a day's journey from the highest mountains in America, I had literally never seen any ground higher than the *coteaux* and cliffs of the semi-prairie States; but in this dream was every detail of those mountains which I was to come to know and love within a year. Was it a throw-back to those Welsh ancestors, who took glee in throwing enemies over a precipice? Why try to explain an unknown X with another unknown Z? When I wakened, my new employer and the porter were standing looking at me. Whether their faces or lips said it I don't know; but I seemed to catch something about "not lasting long."

The office was the usual land and trust affair that in those days acted for capitalists in the East who loaned to settlers buying on the instalment plan in the West. Vast concessions of land had been bought from the government for a song. On this land the trust company advanced settlers enough to make a beginning. There were also hail and fire insurance departments. It seemed to be part of the regular busi-

ness of this office to maintain a good understanding with the leading politicians of the city. They were in and out at all hours. In the hard stress of that winter personal loans were constantly made to these local party leaders and charged up to general office expenses. It also seemed part of this office's business to maintain good relationship with the leading men of the various churches. The man at the head of the hail insurance was a vestryman in one of the Episcopal churches. The manager of the fire insurance was a prominent Methodist. Billy—the son of the president of the university—was evidently another link with professional people. I didn't realize that I was expected to play any part in the linking up of a social chain till one day my employer asked me if I "knew the So-and-So's"—a family of great social influence but always in debt from an extravagant pace. I happened to know them very well. I was asked if I could drop a hint to the head of that family to the effect that my employer would like to talk over a business matter of mutual advantage. "I'm an older man than he is. I'd like to sound him before I make a definite offer," Mr. Blank had explained.

It was really the explanation that made me think twice. Beware of people who explain. Wasn't the usual procedure for two business

men with a matter of mutual advantage between them for one to write the other asking an appointment? I asked Mr. Blank if he knew that this family's chief business ability was in the way of borrowing money. "That's all right," he answered magnanimously. "If he takes this matter up, I'll be glad to make him a small loan."

I don't know to this day why he wished to loan that family money, unless to ensconce himself more securely socially; but I delivered the message, delivered it casually as was suggested to me; and the funny thing was the man came on the run. I found him deep in a conference with Mr. Blank one day as I came from lunch. From their faces I knew they had met at the lunch hour to avoid the office staff. That night, the father of the family stopped me on the street to tell me Mr. Blank had loaned him $900 to meet the deferred payment of a real-estate speculation. "You're a lucky rascal," he laughed, "to be in the office of such a kind old chap."

But was I? That was the question I asked myself before I had been in the office a month. Greater kindness I have never received; and yet though we are told not to look a gift horse in the mouth, we are also told to beware of

the Greeks when they come bearing gifts! I had been introduced to two banks with power of attorney to deposit and draw for both my employer's personal account and the land company's account. Billy, who looked at me with quizzical eyes, when he learned of my position in the office, had gone off on a tour of inspection with Mr. Blank to the colony which this land company had settled—I supposed to extend deferred payments; and I was left to check over from the stubs of receipts all payments made for six months and to compare them with the bank deposits.

The thing that amazed me first was that the exact amount of many of the payments on land were credited to the personal account of Mr. Blank instead of to the land company. I looked in vain for a summing up of the scattered amounts in a big total transferred to the land company. There was none. It struck me as so anomalous that I went down to the banks for a record of the deposit slips. Surprise the second came there! The name on the deposit slips was not in a single case that of Billy. It was that of Mr. Blank, to whom Billy had forwarded all checks, many of them to Europe. The manager in one of these banks was an old family friend; also a trustee of the university. He asked how I was, laid his hand on my shoul-

der and said something that struck me oddly. I had said how glad I was to get the position, so I could pay my medical fees, keep things going and have another try at life, "Yes, yes," he said, "but I think Mr. Blank is luckier to have a girl like you in his office."

As I boarded a car, who should sit down beside me but our friend of the $900 loan?

"It was a decent thing of that old codger to help me out," he said. He was a man who would have accepted a billion dollar loan from the Angel Gabriel and then referred to the whole hierarchy of heaven as "poor old chaps." "But he might as well be generous," he went on. "All these foreign trust and loans will blow up before we're out of the woods. They got their land through corrupt politics. They could sell at 50 cents an acre and come out ahead on the game."

"What about their colonists?" I asked.

He laughed. "Do you know what makes life insurance the most paying thing in the world?" he asked. "It's because six people out of seven who take out life insurance let it lapse. Only the seventh hangs on long enough to draw out what he has put in, with a sporting chance for his relatives if he dies meanwhile. Some of these land companies are selling on instalment plan. Before hard times pass, six out of

seven of these colonists will jump the settlement and abandon everything. They don't get title till they have made the last payment——''

''You mean?''

''I mean nothing,'' he laughed jumping off the car.

A suspicion of which I was ashamed clouded the seeming benignity of the magnanimous Mr. Blank. As I entered the offices, two of the stenographers were talking. One had an absurd little lisp. ''Corth,'' she was saying, ''corth, Billy plays at t' club! corth, he lothes money that ithn't his; but I think Mr. Blank would wather he got tangled a little, it keepth a sthring on Billy.'' Seeing my amazed face, she swirled in her swing chair.

''Don't let me mock your shodesty,'' she laughed. ''Think Mr. Blank would let you bank two or three thouthand twith a week, if he didn't think you'd get mixed and get a sthring on you, too?''

I didn't answer but passed to my own office troubled in thought. Like Billy these stenographers had eyed me quizzically when I first came among them. Then, not considering me a competitor in their arena, they had become more than friendly. It was true though Mr. Blank knew nothing of me directly, I was handling from two to four thousand a week of his

money, and when it came in after banking hours (as it did on Saturday) I had to carry it home with me and sleep with it under my pillow, rather than leave it in a safe of which a dozen office hands knew the combination. There and then, I made up my mind never to have a variation in my accounts by the fraction of a cent. Then, I went at the books to try to rid myself of that cloud of suspicion. Luckily the land accounts opened where a bundle of papers had been inserted among the leaves. I looked at these, they were receipts not sent out. Then, it came to me in a jiffy. I pulled down the books of notes due. It was plain, these were the receipts of settlers, who had paid partly in notes, which Mr. Blank was carrying for them. The suspicion went with a great sigh of relief, he had discounted the notes in the bank of the land company's deposits, and placed the part payments in cash to his own account till the notes came in.

Mr. Blank came home with Billy from the trip of inspection the day before Christmas. His presents to his employees were sumptuous. In fact, everything about the man was sumptuous, from his diamond shirt studs and fluffy shining whiskers to his patent leather shoes beneath conspicuous spats.

Our offices were carefully arranged. The

stenographers occupied the big outer office, where a boy in buttons kept guard at the gate and carried in all callers' cards. The insurance departments flanked one side. Between their big square offices and the chief's apartments of four or five rooms, my own little long narrow office was sandwiched, opening on the street corner, where a network of wires hummed and sang jubilates and misereres of the world of work all day. I used to listen to the winter wind whistling in those wires, like the currents of life touching the silent chords in our own souls; and I was glad that I belonged to the World of Work. Forever, the feeling of a superior culture class passed from me. I was of the World of Workers and would thank God if only I could live to work. What would culture, what would parasitic luxury, what would childish social ascendancy, matter in the sum total of this new World, not of War, but of Work? Two things only would count in this World of Work, of which the wires sang their jubilate and miserere, efficiency in service and the character you built up on your day's job.

To go back to those offices, the partitions were frosted almost as high as a man's shoulders; but in my office along the upper edge of the frosting hung a little long mirror

so tilted that it reflected all that was going on in the big outer office and in the chief's office behind mine. Mr. Blank explained that this was to enable a former secretary to keep an eye on all the office hands without their knowing. It may have been for him to keep an eye on the secretary without the secretary knowing. The day before Christmas, Mr. Blank was personally distributing his largesse. I was standing waiting for a promised payment to come before going home, when I happened to look up in that mirror. What I saw was absolutely innocent, Mr. Blank resplendent in white vest and gray spats with red carnation in his buttonhole was placing a seal ring on the small finger of the coquettish little stenographer who lisped. It was neither the act nor the fact that he had one arm round her shoulders to accomplish the feat of putting on the ring that startled me. It was the fact that his eyes were on the back of my head to see that I did not turn. I did not turn; but in a flash and against my will I saw in the mirror.

He came through to my office and laid on my desk a little picture with his card stuck in the corner of the frame. On the card were the words, "A tribute to a faithful employee." I thought at first it was the picture of the dead daughter of whom he was always talking, but

on looking closer saw it was one of those priceless little old colored engravings of the days when the process was hand colored and hand finished.

"Why, Mr. Blank, I can't take this. I haven't had time to prove whether I am a faithful employee. Hang it on the walls here till I prove it."

He looked at me queerly. Solely because I had a fur coat on waiting to go out, I threw open the window.

"Why did you open the window that way?" he asked sharply.

"Because I have a fur coat on and the heat makes me cough."

"Oh," he said in a low voice, like one who had caught the cue to a wrong pose. "I thought for a minute you were afraid of me."

"Why should I be afraid of you?"

Having caught a second wrong cue, he floundered deeper. "I love you, child," with a long pause, which I did not fill, "as I loved my daughter." I was beginning to doubt those invocations to that daughter. "I would die before I would see any harm befall you."

"Don't you do any dying for me," I laughed. "I prefer people who live for me."

"You're right, you're right," he said, and he wished me a Merry Christmas and told me he

might be called to Chicago by the midnight express, in which case I would find typewritten instructions on my desk. Then he retreated awkwardly amused to his own office. Now you know why I always hold that the ink-black is no menace to youth. The danger is from the half tones.

Still the payment did not come in. I heard the stenographers covering their machines and going home. Only one of the insurance men and Buttons and I remained on duty; and I had not turned on the light. I heard the wires hum and sing to the winter wind, their jubilate, their miserere, to the World of Work. Hurrying Christmas throngs packed the streets below, workers all of them; I, too, was part of the big current now. Why did people work? To keep alive, that was the excuse for nearly all the ill of life; for the gambling hells, whose lurid lights I could see amid blaring saloons; for the painted cheeks, whose more lurid lights I could see amid the Christmas throngs: yes and for the good as well as the ill of life, for the jubilate that the wires sang of man's conquests over space and time. To keep alive, that was why I was working; why I was part of the current.

Suddenly, I saw the light switched on in the chief's office. It was that diabolical mirror

again reflecting the ornate chandeliers of the apartments beyond his inner office. I looked up. In the mirror I saw the face of Mr. Blank. He was sitting in the suite famed for its yearly dinner to the Eastern directors of his company; famed, too, for its art collection. His gaze was wrapt on a picture not reflected in the mirror. It was the expression. The mirror couldn't create that, as of a face intoxicated with the opium fumes of dark unspeakable thoughts. I shut the window and left the offices with the cloud of that suspicion back in my mind again, with a poignant memory, too, of that dream on the train.

A telegram to the house next morning told me Mr. Blank had left for Chicago and requested me to get the keys to his apartments from the caretaker and register to him some papers he had left in the bureau drawer of his room.

By chance the brother next to me in age walked down with me that Christmas morning to get the papers. I wonder now, though I had told my mother nothing; (what, when you weigh it, was there to tell) had her clairvoyant love followed the shadow of a doubt in my own soul and so engineered the company of that brother! He was a boy of redundant

health and animal spirits, without an atom of reverence in his soul for the fine arts. I was so busy unlocking a succession of doors, finding the bureau, locating the right drawer and extracting the proper papers, that I had not noticed the room till my brother let out a howl that sounded like, "By Golly, Jeremiah, Jehosophat and all the prophets! Water! Water! Lady fainted! Open the window. High art! Fine art! Wow!"

"What in the dickens is the matter with you?" I asked; and I looked up from locking the drawer.

The walls of the lounging room, the dining room and bedroom were covered with beautiful paintings; but what had set my brother off with his nonsense was a life size type of the art, that by no possible stretch of imagination can be described as concealing anything. It was not the naked art that startled me. It was the memory of the face wrapped in opium fumes of thought as the gaze had rested on that picture.

"Gee, kid-sister, you've turned white as a ghost," exclaimed my brother. "I was only fooling. It's none of our business what the old boy likes, but he's got 'em bad." Later, going down the stairs, the elevator was not running on the holiday, and we took the stairs

in relays of three landings at a time, he turned to me. "You look all-fired sober! You wouldn't let anything like that affect your job, would you? Say, twelve hundred a year is twelve hundred a year, these hard times. We all have to live. You hang on!"

I did not answer. The boy was simply voicing the sentiment of the economic world that, where money is concerned, rotten morals and leprous souls don't matter. Will they continue not to matter, I wonder, in the new day, when economic woman becomes a dominant factor? Our grandmothers would not buy household wares of peddlers, who might carry the black plague. Shall we of the new day patronize larger vendors, who exist by incorporating a black plague into our very commercial system?

That is what I mean when I say that the new problems of woman in industry are but the old problems of the home projected out from the home into a complexity called commerce. Half the commerce of the world could not exist one day without the patronage of women. Shall women patronize any form of commerce that runs a Juggernaut car over the maimed bodies of women workers?

Could I but have told my brother, the letter of confidential instructions on my desk nailed me to my place faster than rivets. Mr. Blank had received warning from Chicago of a very grave situation in banking. At any day, the crash might come. (You remember how the banks went smashing in '93 like a succession of firecrackers?) If my health would not permit me all day in the office, I was to take a cab, charging it to the office, and go down between one and three. I was to deposit all collections in both banks at a quarter of three. Precisely at three I was to forward a draft from these banks to him in Chicago, never leaving more of a balance than would keep the accounts open. He could not be back before February and might be delayed till March, but depended on me to keep things right. It was in January that instructions were wired to cut the expenses of the office to the bone: lay off stenographers, retire Billy, let all the insurance men but the two heads go.

I had intended to stick it out till Mr. Blank returned when something unexpected caused me to resign with lightning celerity. One can pay too much for the crust of bread that is called a living. One has to keep alive; but when you sacrifice everything to that end, life

has an ironical way of fooling you. He that loveth his life shall lose it! Buttons, who was my sole companion in the office, came in with a card one day, a lady wanted to see Mr. Blank. I told him to tell her he was not at home. Buttons reported that "the lady was cryin'" and said she "had to see somebody." I told him to show her in. The minute she entered, I knew the type, "placed her," as we said in the West, upper middle-class English, coming out to lord it and ending as pauper; the type that will never cease to stamp on the hands coming up below and never cease to kiss the soles of the feet on the rung above; that scorns "shop" and "trade" and lives by bank or some office rule of thumb, and never attains anything more than remote connection with a hyphenated Sir Somebody — Somebody. She was in deep mourning and visibly weeping.

They had bought land from Mr. Blank's company, and promptly paid all the instalments but this year's, which was the last. Her husband had died, which stopped the remittances; but on this year's payment her husband had sent the whole of his last remittance (I remembered it; I had had to change the pounds, shillings and pence to exactly $133.33 1-3); and he had given his note for the balance. They had not received the title to their property; but

was not a note payment in the eyes of the law? Didn't they really own their property; and wasn't the proper procedure for Mr. Blank to collect the note against the estate?

I asked her to wait a moment while I looked up the land book. There was the receipt held back against the note; and on the deposit slip was the $133.33 1-3 placed in Mr. Blank's private account. I had an impulse to take the receipt out and give it to her. It is one of the blunders I have never forgiven myself that I didn't; but I wanted to be sure before acting; and asked her who her husband's executors were. They were Mr. Blank and the managers of the two banks, where he deposited his money. Like a flash, I decided to go to that manager, who was a friend, tell him those suspicions that had now been again roused, and ask his advice. I told her to come back the next afternoon, and I would try and wire Mr. Blank.

It was mid-day. I had not gone a block down the main street before I saw that something terrible was wrong. There was a crowd of people like a mob, struggling, tossing in solid masses across the middle of the road.

"What's the matter?" I asked our friend of that $900 loan.

"Nothing! It's come! That's all," he said.

"What's come?"

"The smash! There's a run on three banks now; and I'll bet a dozen close their doors before three o'clock."

We were in the middle of the maelstrom of '93. Our friend's bank was one of the first to smash. He was ruined to his last dime. Somewhat breathless and terribly puzzled to know what to do, I hurried back to the office building and was just in time to see the patent leathers and gray spats of Mr. Blank's feet going up the elevator shaft. I followed on the next lift and bounced into the office genuinely glad to see him back; and in a few words told him why and what I had been about to do. He drew a little long whistle and stood looking down at the run on the bank in the street.

"Better go home, now," he said. "Nothing more doing to-day. I'll look that case up."

Knowing that the woman would call the next day, I made a point of reaching the office early.

"Oh, did you look up that case, Mr. Blank?" I asked.

"Why yes; and, for the first time, I find you in error," he answered.

"But no, Mr. Blank, look here at the land book."

"All right, let us see," he said, coming out to the high wall desk, where the land book lay.

I turned over to the page. It was not cut

out. I was dumfounded. It was not there. The whole page was literally and utterly gone, it must have been clipped round the binding wires; for there was not a scar of it left. I turned over the bundle of receipts held against payment of notes. The receipt, too, was gone.

"Ah-ha," he smiled suavely. "It's such a joke to find you wrong, I'll forgive you."

I did not answer and I did not hesitate. Instinct strikes surer than reason in such cases. I went back to my office and I sat down and I wrote exactly seven words, "I hereby beg to resign my position." I carried this in to Mr. Blank. He read it and seemed not to comprehend, put on his glasses and read it again. His hand trembled a little and he flushed deep with anger. Sitting down, he drew his check book over and had written my week's wages when he suddenly remembered and laughed.

"Not much use for checks now," he said. Opening his pocketbook, he handed me $25 in bills. I said good-bye to him and wished him well. He said good-bye to me and wished me well; and that is the last I saw of Mr. Blank. He, too, went into the undertow of that maelstrom before the panic had passed; but please note the point, in order to place $133.33 1-3 to his own personal account in time of stress, he

permitted that woman to lose a property worth $5,000 all of which had been paid for but a few hundred dollars; and those hundred dollars in the eyes of the law had been paid by a note.

It was not till I was out on the street walking home that I figured out that, over and above the money needed for the lame duck, for the medical fees and home, there was barely $50 left; but the thing I have always asked myself is this:

Supposing I had had no prayers to fend off the harpies and the hells; no invisible white hands of love holding me close and warm; no circle of strong and loving friends to gird my life about with a wall of defense; no home; no place to go; no money; nothing between me and hell but the park bench, as thousands, tens of thousands, millions of wage-earning girls in the big cities are hemmed by poverty and harried by vice, how would I have escaped from the trap? Palaver of philanthropic school how to gather up mangled remains, files of reports by investigating commissions would not have saved me. Could I have stayed in that office and participated in its crookedness, and given innocent front to its indecency; and not have been contaminated in soul by so doing? And so when a sister, big or little, goes down under the wheels of the car, falls by the way, fouls

the stainless garments of her womanhood, stones shall we hurl at those who fall; or ashes of shame shall we cast on our own guilty heads of respectability that we have let even as little as the weakest and the poorest fall unhindered by the way?

CHAPTER VII

THE SISTERHOOD OF SERVICE

By the time I had turned over books and keys, and put things to rights in the office of the financial promoter, it was twelve o'clock.

The office building was situated just where four great thoroughfares converged into a main street, like Broadway, New York, at 42nd Street; or Yessler Way, Seattle. Workers were pouring out for the noon hour from the leather and cigar factories across the bridge, from the big departmental stores, and from the insurance buildings. There were literally myriads of young girls. I had never noticed them so closely before that day, when for the first time I felt myself a part of the great army of the new economic era, when for the first time I felt the solidarity and cohesiveness of this great World of Work.

I watched the throngs pouring out for the noon hour. I do not need to tell you, do I, that the women and girls in the offices wore airs of grand duchesses of the Vere de Vere type

to the women and girls of the departmental stores; and that the women and girls of the departmental stores wore the grand duchess air to the women and girls from the factories; and I suppose the women and girls of the factories would try the same airs on the scrubbies of the basement, snobs all the way down the scale, trampling one another's chances. Yet all were fellow workers in the great new economic army of the World of Work. What menaced one menaced all. Laws defective for one were defective for all. Lack of protection that might injure one might likewise injure each, or any, or all of that army of workers. Men had their lodges, their fraternities, their labor unions, to help in time of stress; but this army of women workers, more easily menaced because they were women, what had they? They had not even a standard of physical fitness; of personal defense; of value in the eyes of the law as an economic asset to the nation. These were the mothers of the coming race; yet the law would punish the maiming of a cow with fourteen years' imprisonment; the maiming of a woman or girl with two years; the theft of a colt with five years' imprisonment; the theft of a little girl worker, abduction, I believe, is the ugly word describing it, with two years' imprisonment.

Of the 450,000 people, more or less, who will have to pay an income tax in the United States, it is estimated that less than 40,000 are women. Of the wage-earners in the United States, seven millions are women. Standing on the street corner, watching the army of women workers, it did not require prophetic foresight to gauge the revolution in values bound to come when this army of women workers wakens to a consciousness of its own solidarity and cohesiveness, wakens to that freemasonry of comradeship that exists among all classes of men, without any confusion of coal scuttles with silver spoons.

There and then I took my resolution. As between this little coterie of women whom the world called "favored, protected," and this great army whom the world called "workers," unprotected themselves, but protecting others, I took my stand with the workers.

Why?

They stood for plus.

They represented a marching army, progress forward, not that stationary excellence for which reactionaries fight and which to me means atrophy to the powers of the soul.

They needed help, and, more than help, they needed the comprehension, not of charity, but of independent, self-respecting comradeship.

Then, if the Christ-creed was to be anything more than an anodyne for an uneasy conscience, what ranks offered better scope for the helpfulness and service of that creed than this army of women workers?

Also, there was another reason. It came falteringly then. It comes falteringly to-day. The modern world has literally been robbing the home of woman's vocations for fifty years. Nursing, teaching, mending, weaving, butter-making, plain house-keeping—have been supplanted by the hospital with the professional nurse, the school with the professional teacher, factory clothing, factory weaving, factory food, the departmental store, the apartment house. If the process of robbing the home of woman's vocations continues with the accelerated progress of the last fifty years, will the day not come when the unoccupied woman, the rich woman, the woman who has not married, or whose children have grown and gone out of the home; when the girl who wants an occupation and is past the teens when fripperies fill an occupation, will the day not come when this smaller coterie of women will ask permission to come down and out of their idleness into this army of service? Isn't this practically the meaning of "the get-together" clubs in every

city in the United States, where the women who work and the women who don't meet for mutual helpfulness? Isn't it the meaning of the terrible divorce court tragedies of the idle hands? Lady Bountiful, passing out largess with kid gloves and a forty-rod pole, is not needed as ensign-carrier in this army. Charity is always cheaper than justice. What is needed is not charity. What is needed is a new *noblesse oblige;* to teach the toilers to sing songs of joy again over their looms; a Sisterhood, not of Discontent, but of Service, in which the weakest and the poorest and the meanest will be girt with the defence of the strongest in time of stress and danger. Will women work this problem out, as men have worked it out in their fraternities?

It sounds easy, this resolution; but it wasn't. Of a very large connection on both sides of the house, we were the only family where a woman ever became a wage-earner. It was bad enough to be obliged to do it; but to glory in it! I can hear some of the spurious wails yet. One good relative, I recall, warned me it would totally ruin my manners for society. Another good dame, who was not related and had just come West in time to receive a tail-end blow from the Panic, used to sit bewailing by the hour that her "dear girls should ever need to

work." She had set her face like flint against that need, telling her daughters it was the duty of "father and brothers to take the blasts of the world," till the father took so many blasts that he ran away to New York with an adventuress; and one son carried the load till he used government funds of which he was custodian, so that his mother had to mortgage her home to keep him out of the penitentiary; and a second son ran away from home to escape an impossible burden. When the third son married and left the sisters in the lurch, they turned out and wished they had met the challenge of fate half way before.

Another woman, I recall, who had been a somewhat famous opera singer in her day and married a financial broker in our city, perhaps more decent than Mr. Blank but also more flamboyant, was so determined that the world should not know they had been hit by the panic that she moved her entire establishment over to the new palatial hotel which the railroad had built, and there entertained elaborately and dressed as of old in Paris imported gowns, and set her face like flint against the new order. Perhaps, it was her way of helping her broker husband not to lose his customers. Perhaps, it was her way of working, though she declaimed that under no circumstances should a

woman ever become a wage-earner; but no one was bluffed but the bluffer. We all knew that the hotel carried their account for $10,000 that year, in return for her husband's influence as a lobbyist in railroad matters; and the strain of pretending she had what she hadn't sent her to a Paris nerve specialist at the end of a year, where only the agility of a nurse prevented suicide during nervous depression. Personally, I think that woman worked a great deal harder for her living than those of us who openly joined the army of wage-earners.

I remember telling a very dear woman relative my resolution to fight *for* the army of wage-earners as well as *with* them and of the dangers that must menace many a lonely girl worker who had no strong circle of loyal friends to gird her round with companion-ship and safety.

"Why do girls go into employments where there are such dangerous associates?" she demanded indignantly. "No girl ought to be exposed to such dangers. No girl ought to leave her home, if there are such dangers outside it."

My answer I wrote in one of those little autograph albums which were the rage at the

time. At the top of the page I penned her words—Girls Ought not to Go into Employments Where There are Dangers? Below I wrote one of the rhymes, that now hummed through my head of nights in place of old Solomon's epigrams:

"Good maxims, these, for those who need them not!
If hounds be hard on heel of deer, then what?
When spurs dig deep in bleeding sides, the horse grows hot."

"The deer pursued ne'er halts at brink of bank,
The horse hard-pressed can't choose to stay in rank,
Tho' wall too high or ditch too broad may break a shank."

Having been entrenched with the triple protection of father, husband, brother, I know she had not the faintest idea what I meant.

I did not get off the car opposite my home. I rode to the end of the car track and walked out on the prairie, where the purple wind flowers were just breaking through the snow. I wanted to walk in the tossing rough spring wind and to think in the clean open spaces.

What reason had I to give for resigning a twelve-hundred a year job in time of such financial stress? I had been bound to the wheel, and had at one stroke cut the bonds. You can't explain that Astarte and Moloch may have reincarnations in our modern system dangerous

to youth as the old circle of fire and drugged wines. Some future historian will narrate that of our day. We, ourselves, refuse to take cognizance of it. No man, or woman, has battled out the contest of life without meeting the same challenge. It is the eternal challenge. Our temptation to barter what we know is right for the crust of bread called a living always comes, when we are in the wilderness spent of body and soul; when we feel that those we love are dependent on the selling of our souls.

"Do the fool-thing and expect God to perform a miracle to save you! Jump over the precipice of right and wrong; then expect Heaven to save a smash; as you, perhaps, have saved others!" Heaven doesn't! There is no fence of miracles round Life's precipice, though we break our necks to save those we love! Don't think you'll meet the challenge only once! You'll meet it every day you are in the game of life; not as downright and honest spoken as Satan in the wilderness. That's why I like the clean-cut way Christ sent Satan about his business! Most of us haven't that sense!

When I reached home two or three friends had come in for afternoon tea. An animated discussion was going on about somebody who had lost a position in civil service through the

hard times. "You don't think there would be any chance in your office?" someone asked.

"There might be," I answered. "I have just resigned."

If I had thrown a bomb into that little group, I couldn't have caused greater consternation.

"Well," gasped one auditor, who belonged to that category of women whom George Adam Smith has described as "the cow that tramples more corn than it can ever eat." "Whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad."

Only two people did not agree with her; my mother, who did not speak at all, and that daughter of a friend to whom I have already referred—the girl with "I won't," born on her very lips.

It is sometimes a good thing to have the spirit to challenge life before it challenges you. This youngster had jumped into the discussion with her sleeves rolled up before I had a chance to offer any explanation.

"You did perfectly right," she burst out. "I wouldn't stick in an old office in your state of health. What's a salary if you give your life for it? Industry be diddled," she asseverated with a stamp. "I guess the life of one single soul is of more value than all industry, if Christ wasn't a big liar! I guess there is something more in life than plugging for a liv-

ing! I want to live: not merely exist! Any girl is a fool who drudges along without a try at bettering her position—I don't care what it is. As to sacrificing herself! Bah! Sheep and the shambles! I hate sheep types! If I were in that kind of trap, I'd jump out if I had to break my neck——"

"You might break your neck," wailed the woman who had thought it criminal of anyone under any circumstances to resign a gainful occupation in such hard times.

"Then, I'd sooner break my neck and have one breath of real life than live a life of perpetual imprisonment; and I'll bet Christ would back me if He were here to-day," vowed this prenatal rebel.

As we all knew she lived up to her creed of defying life's challenges, a laugh greeted this sally.

She waited till the others had left.

"I bet a hill of beans, you couldn't stand that old shin plaster another minute," she at once exploded. Her whole life was an explosion of temper and laughter and tears and storms and actions. I used to wonder if she were still when she slept.

"Mr. Blank is one of the kindest——"

"Waugh," she interrupted in Sioux lingo; "but he yappies too much. He's kind first, last

and altogether for what he gets in return for himself; and you know it; and don't you lie about it! What are you going to do?"

"Hike for the higher altitudes, I guess, where the ozone is champagne."

She bounced almost out of her boots.

"You are to come back to the ranch with me." She was living on a ranch at the foothills of the Rockies.

"I declare if I have to go back there alone, I'm going to cultivate conversation with jack rabbits and coyotes."

I tried to stem her torrent and explain that when medical debts and lame ducks and home had been cared for there would be less than $50 left, and that a semi-invalid would be a nuisance and a burden in a home where the only help obtainable consisted of disreputable old squaws; but she swept my objections aside in a torrent. Fifty dollars was loads and bushels and stacks of money. She almost insinuated that if we had more we wouldn't know what to do with it. We could use the ranch horses and rent an extra saddle for the summer at $5; she thought it probable that she could borrow an extra saddle. Her brother was in the railroad offices. It seemed the business of the ranch was to sell beef cattle to the din-

ing car department; and she would go and see the divisional superintendent and obtain a pass that very week. She was as good as her word. She left for the mountains the next day; and posted a pass back to me inside a month.

Now, the question I ask myself is this—supposing I had not had a pre-natal rebel for a friend; would I not also have passed to the immeasurable human scrap heap? Supposing when I closed that other door to wrong opportunity ("winnow not with every wind" said the prophet) that her indomitable spirit had not unlatched the other door as you and I and all of us of the Sisterhood of Service can unlatch without cost or effort to ourselves, doors of opportunity to the cul-de-sac of other lives, would I not have perished in the trap, or died bound to the wheel, as thousands, tens of thousands of lives perish every year for want of a little dauntless thoughtfulness?

I had set out in life wanting passionately to know if suffering were necessary, challenging the pious blasphemy that it was God's will women should suffer ill; and I had come far enough along the road to know that the most of misery is unnecessary, entirely human and hand-made, quite as much of it resulting from fumble fingers and thick brains as from devil-

tries; and the most of it from sheer dense egoistical stupidity.

I had learned that you can't break law; it breaks you; but I had to go a pace farther along the road before I found the way out that "nature ever faithful is to such as trust her faithfulness"; that, if you kick against law, you'll only bark your shins; but that if you harness law and steer with it, not against it, there is no harbor of human happiness whither you may not sail.

It all cost some horribly acute growing pains of the soul. Don't grin in a superior fashion! Those who have not had growing pains may still have their growing to do; and wisdom teeth come hardest when they come latest. It was the change from a fetish faith to a faith in a Larger God that gave me my worst growing pains at this period. Sometimes, out in the mountains, flat on my back in the sun, while the horse grazed at the end of a tethering rope, this sort of thing would come to me faster than I could write it in a book I usually carried in the saddle bag and read at noon:

"What profit late to learn
To port we might have sailed,
When wisdom to discern
Was lacking till we failed?

"Are we frail jetsam cast
Mere toys upon the wave?
Are souls, which Thou hast made,
Too poor for Thee to save?"

Or this:

"And if I have faith but as one grain of seed,
I shall say to this mountainous thing in my way,
'Be removed to the depths of the sea'; and with speed
To obey, it uprises and sinks 'neath the spray!

"If all faith work through law, and without works be dead,
Then, the plan of two worlds is consistent, and man
Must couple his schemes on the track of law's tread
For since time began, not a jot nor a tittle hath failed of
God's plan."

The night I resigned, when I sat down to read to my mother (we had neither of us mentioned the fact of my resignation), I opened George Adam Smith's poetic interpretation of "Isaiah" as the epic poem of a race adjured by the passionate and inspired singer to come back from the whoring after false ideals, please note that word "whoring," and grow to the stature of its national destiny. (Of course, we do not need such passionate, inspired singers to-day for a money-mad age whirling dervish dances round the umbilical cord of its own ego.)

The first words I read were, "In returning and rest shall be your confidence." I turned

a few pages, where Smith has rendered the original in English blank verse. "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on; the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in."

My mother had the most calming presence I have ever known in a human being. She was sitting with her long slim white hands folded in her lap. The red of the lamp shade seemed to accentuate the chiseled white profile in the half dark of the room.

"I am glad you resigned," she said. "I felt all along that the time would come when you would. It has served its purpose."

"And when one door closes behind?" I asked.

"When the half gods go, the true gods come," she answered with that faith of the little child, which cannot doubt. "Read those lines of George Adam Smith again."

"They are not Professor Smith's. They are the prophet's: In returning and rest shall be your confidence: For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on; the covering narrower than he can wrap himself in."

"I wonder if that is why we go askew?" she asked. "I wonder if God's plans are so much bigger than our creeds that like new wine they burst the old bottles?"

"What do you think the first means?" I asked her.

She sat perfectly still without answering for a moment; then smiled as quietly as if my little world of faith had not smashed down; as if, indeed, the panic had not torn the little world of the whole half million population of the state at that time up by the roots like a plowshare driven through an ant hill.

"Read it again," she said.

"In returning and rest shall be your confidence!"

"It means," she said, "what you are going to do when you go to the mountains and cast yourself in confidence and peace on the eternal laws of God."

And that is exactly what happened. I can no more describe the process of healing in body and soul than you can describe the process of rebirth when a night rain falls on parched ground and all the slumbering seedlings come through with green hands that clap in gladness to wind and sun. A wise old canoeman once said to me: "Never fight rapids, paddle like hell till you catch the current that will swerve you away from the rocks, then lie back and let her go and take your ease!"

It is utterly the same with life. Work like

the furies incarnate, if you like, till you learn what the law is, what the trend of it is! Catch that, and it will carry you past all rocks, perhaps not to the haven of your desire, but to the destiny to which the current of the law carries, whither you have to go willy-nilly; and whether you arrive whole or smashed depends on whether you go with the current of God's law or against it!

My friend was a tonic. She fought and jounced my convictions at every turn as I fought hers, which is infinitely better than the softening sympathy that turns pity in on self. If you died with her, you would have to die in your boots and on the run; for she kept you out morning, noon and night. So much of our misery comes from the corrosion of acid discontent in the repose of our better natures that this activity, giving no time for morbid thought, went far toward healing. I defy you to sit on a spirited horse with a morbid liver or a peeved self-pitying soul! You have to take hold of yourself; or you will break your neck.

Also, it was a stage in the West's development that can never again be repeated in American history. Frontier was giving way to pioneer. Ranch lands, where one cow had had

roaming ground over a thousand acres were being carved up into the settlers' quarter sections. The newspapers were still disputing as to whether farmers could grow wheat in the dry inter-mountain empire. The first transcontinental to cross the Divide in this part of the Rockies had just been completed; and the hordes of Chinese and Italian navvies had scattered to the lumber mills and mines of the mountains. I remember after turbid spring floods and summer thaw bringing down the snow of the upper peaks, at the period when the tin-horn gambling hells and saloon dance halls were running full blast, of a Monday morning after a Sunday celebration, as many as ten dead "Chinks" would be washed up on the sand bars in the river. Sometimes the dead man washed up would be white. Even then, few inquiries were made. If you didn't want to go over the precipice, keep away from the edge; for there was no mistaking the red light of danger on that edge!

Yet, with it all, womanhood was safer than in the padded parlors of civilization. Why? I asked my friend's brother that question once.

"Because every man jack in this camp knows that if he as much as looked disrespect at a decent woman, he would be cut into scraps in

about two seconds; and there would be no coroners' inquest,'' he answered savagely.

I had a forcible illustration of this not long after I went out. My friend and her brother were going for a Sunday to one of the silver camps up from the foothills half way to heaven, as he expressed it. We had set out at daybreak on Saturday with the peak where we were going plainly ahead of us, but we lost sight of it when we left the foothills and plunged into the heavy hemlock forests to corkscrew up a zig-zag trail barely wide enough for a horse. Fool hens, or mountain grouse, flumped up heavily and bobbed and nodded at us from logs by the side of the trail. Marmot would come scrabbling up from the rocks and whistle shrilly as a school boy. Sometimes you heard a raucous cry overhead, and, looking up, you could see through the gray-green Spanish moss, a bald-head eagle perched lonely on the topmost tip of a dead branch. Here, a turn in the corkscrew trail opened vistas to the upper peaks shining opalescent in a cloudless sky. There, you had skirted the sharp elbow of a precipice; and were neck deep in fog thick as wool at cloud line. Another pace and turn, you were above cloudline in the flawless sunshine again. Wherever a coulee cut and

trenched down the mountain slope, there you would see the rough prospectors with their sacks of tools following the "float," or signs of metal, up the stream bed to the head veins. In this way, the most wonderful galena veins of that country had been found. Washed or unwashed, shaven or rough with weeks in the wilds, at sight of a woman, the roughest man's hat would come off. Even the Chinks would stand off the trail and simper a "How-do." It wasn't air we were breathing. It was some compound of distilled sunbeams brewed up with about a thousand years of oil of healing from the pines. Every switch-back on the trail, we would pause and give our horses a breath. I drank and drank great breaths of the dew-washed resinous air. My friend looked over her shoulder and kicked her feet free from her stirrups to ease her horse.

"Isn't it a scrumptious joy to be alive and kicking?" she said.

It was such a scrumptious joy I was beginning to wonder in what nightmare prison of my own personality I had been chained back there in that other life. Wasn't that the trouble in this restless life of pressure in the cities—*humans were chained up to serve things, instead of the things being chained up to serve the humans?* Freedom beckoned to us from the

glad world of the out-doors; and we sat glooming in our own self-created despairs till eyes could not see God for our maudlin tears?

Just where the trail ran into the long single street of a raw, new, unpainted mining town, built with the back doors overhanging the brink of a brawling mountain brook, a fog came drifting out of the pass followed by a drenching rain. My friends were not sure that a drenching rain would be good for me at that stage of the game on a two days' trip, and asked if I would mind staying in the hotel of the little mining town for the night, while they went on up to the silver camp fifteen miles farther. The brother was to collect the money on some beeves shipped in, and the sister did not like him to come down that trail alone with so much ready money on his person. I told them to go ahead, by all means. It would be fun to see the new camp.

"I would not go out after dark if I were you," called the brother, as I took refuge under the hotel veranda. "Saturday is pay day, you know, all the miners and lumber jacks will be down from the hills."

The hotel had board partitions of one ply, unpainted; and there was not a door in the house with a lock. After dinner, I propped a chair back under the door knob of my room

so that it could not move without wakening me; and I fell into a sleep to defy the crack of doom. The grand duchess, who kept the hotel, and I were the only two women in a harum-scarum population of about two thousand; that is, the only two women except some little painted, almond-eyed girls across the way in a Japanese dance-*hall,* I believe they called it. It should have been called *hell.*

I seemed to hear the pour of the rain in my sleep, the roar of the brook, the tap-tap of little feet across the way to the strumming of some strange oriental string music, when I suddenly came awake to an explosion like a powder blast. The rain had ceased. Moon light silvered the room; and the brook tore behind the house less boisterously as of deeper waters; but the roar filled the canyon and shook the house. The lumber jacks and miners had come down from the hills; and I do not think there was a faucet or spiggot or bottle or barrel, or saloon or gambling joint, that was not doing a wide-open business all that night. The houses could not roof a tenth of the population. Men were auctioning whisky in tin cups from the tops of kegs in mid-road. They were gambling and dancing and sitting and sleeping in every variety of posture in the open street. They reminded me of a disturbed ant hill or

caterpillar nest. It was a bit boisterous; so I did not go down for supper; but sleep was out of the question. The barroom was directly under me and I could see what was going on through cracks in the floor.

Toward midnight, the drunks were fighting drunk. I thought they had exhausted "the swears" of every language under the sun earlier in the evening; but when a stiletto drunk Italian and a shillalah drunk Irishman began shouting in unexpurgated vernacular on exactly which part of each other's anatomy they intended to vent their international love, anything I had heard before seemed like a school's first reader compared to an unabridged Webster. Just when a yell seemed to forewarn instant murder, there was a scuffle-scuffle of feet. Two bodies seemed to be dragged toward the railing of the back piazza above the brawling brook. There was a thud, then a splash, then tremendous roars of laughter; another thud, another splash, more shouts; and the crowds rushed back to the barroom for drinks all round. Good fellowship would last till a Polack and Russian, a Jap and Chinaman, would begin discussing each other's ancestry in colloquial westernisms. Then, the thud and the splash would repeat themselves. This lasted without

breathing space till five Sunday morning, when the chill of the mountain air drove the rioters back up the hills, that is, those of the rioters who could still use their legs. Hundreds lay sprawled in the roadway or curled up on saloon steps sound asleep.

A knock came on my door at six, the barroom below was still brawling louder than the brook, and the Chinese waiter from the dining room asked me if I would please "come down and have bleakfast at once; my palty from the mines would be down in a few time, and I was to meet them at the end of the camp t'wail a mile out."

I hadn't time to tell him to send breakfast up before he trotted downstairs; and I didn't relish passing the open barroom door, whence the smell of rum came reeking up stronger than a gin mill and the brawling outsounded the brook. Someone must have heard me coming down the stair; for the bar-tender rapped on the bar with a glass. "Lady's coming, shut up, gents," I heard him order, as I dived past the door into the dining-room; and "the gents shut up" so hard and quick you could have heard a pin fall while I was at breakfast.

A cowboy stood at the door with my horse. He helped me to the saddle and told me where to find my party waiting a mile down the trail.

The road was literally littered with unconscious drunks. "Set tight to the leather and keep a sure stirrup," he advised. "Some of them booze-busters might scare your broncho!"

I gave the horse a little kick to put him past the saloon fronts quickly; and he shot out so suddenly that away flew my watch. Before I could turn the horse round, a dozen men were on their feet to get it. The grizzled fellow who handed it to me took off his hat and wished me a pleasant trip.

The incident was typical of the West in its wildest era. A woman was safer than in a missionary meeting or a young ladies' seminary, that is, a woman who was not a fool. A woman who was a fool, or careless of the respect due her womanhood, could have all the folly on tap in the shortest time possible. At the very period when the mountains were infested with discarded gangs of navvies and roving prospectors women had begun taking up homesteads. You came on their tiny log cabins in the big timber country; or their ten by ten shacks anchored to the prairie by posts at each end, as you rode down from the foothills.

One trail my friend and I used to follow passed half a dozen shanties of girl homestead-

ers in a ride of forty miles. The thing that struck me was how many of these girls were foreign-born, naturalized citizens.

"Why do you think that is?" I asked. "Why don't American girls do that sort of thing more? To be bound to the industrial wheel isn't much more independent than the old game."

She reined up her horse and thought a moment.

"Oh, convention has such a strangle-hold and we're so democratic," she explained, "that we spend most of our time hanging on with our eyebrows for fear we lose caste."

"You don't," I answered. "When your brother and the cow-boys were away last winter and the blizzards came up, you rode out and rounded up the whole herd."

"But would I have done so if we had lived Down East where everybody would have cocked an eye at me? Don't I do what I sweet please out here because we are so secure of our position that nothing matters?"

"Then you think that it's the women up at the top and the women down at the bottom, not the half-way-ups, that will get rid of that strangle-hold for women and form the great Sisterhood of Service?"

"I don't know what you mean by Sisterhood

of Service! I don't think women are ever very sisterly to one another! You're always shooting some transcendental sky-rocket past my head into clouds; but if you want to know what I think of half-way-ups, I think they'll always fool you; they are so scared out of their wits they might slip down a peg."

"Let's go in and meet some of these homesteaders," I suggested.

"All right! We'll water our horses here! I know this girl, she is teaching the district school, while she puts in her homestead duties."

We dismounted opposite a gate formed of two posts looped with strands of wire. A robust woman of twenty-four, or thereabouts, tanned and weathered by wind and sun, came to the shanty door. Life had been cut free from all strangle-hold of the artificial here. Shanty and equipment could not have cost more than $50. A biscuit box had been extemporized into a book shelf, where lay two or three magazines, a Balzac and a Bible. The bed had been built sailor-berth fashion against the wall. Another box set up on four crossed legs formed the table, from which we shared her evening meal of bacon and eggs. From the window covered with dimity curtains we could see her broncho

tethered out on the prairie. A big dog lay snapping at the flies in the sun. It seemed, she had begun life as an operative in a watch factory in Switzerland. Then, she had taught a tiny hamlet school in her native land.

"But the wages were not $25 a month," she explained. "I could never get ahead on that. What's the use of a woman pretending she is independent, unless she is independent? So I emigrated, came steerage; and worked my way out here somehow, and got a position in a mission school at $50 a month; but if women are going to be independent, they must study out ways of being independent, the way a man does; so I thought I might as well be putting in homestead duties while I taught, and get some sit-fast spot on earth I could call my own. This is my last year of homesteading. Next year, I prove up for title."

"Will you sell?" I asked. Later on, land in the locality of this woman's homestead, sold at $50 an acre.

"But no," she answered. "I want an inglenook of my own always. I'll bring out my father and mother."

She told us that except for midsummer, when a friend from the nearest town joined her, she lived alone, riding to and from the mission school on her broncho.

"Of course," she said, "on winter nights, the coyotes smell the ham cooking and come howling under the window; but my big St. Bernard drives them off; and I don't know that there is as much to fear from these sort of wolves as from the kind of wolves you meet in town," and she laughed.

I suppose she felt our attitude of tacit challenge. Her words recalled those dream wolves of my childhood, Anxious Fright and Want, which this form of economic independence drove off the heels of pursued womanhood. Her words also recalled the dire predictions of the study chair theorists about individualism menacing motherhood and the economic independence of woman modifying the tendency to marriage, and so leaving the propagation of the species to inferior types—you have heard the arguments—haven't you? If I had put it that way, she would not have known at what I was driving; so I came at it another way.

"Yes," I said, as we helped her to clean up her supper dishes before going back to our saddles, "but if you had stayed on in Switzerland, you would probably have married some neighbor's son, and had your own little home and family."

She almost snorted her disdain, "But no,"

she declared. "If I had stayed in Switzerland, we would have been so poor that I could not have afforded to have children. I would not have wanted children. If I had had them, with the high cost of living, I could not have done justly by them, they would have had to join the armies of Germany or France."

"And now?" laughed my friend.

"And now *when* I marry," she did not say *if* I marry, "I'll have something to do for my children; *There will be no unwanted child of mine.*"

My friend suddenly sobered. You will remember she had been born with "I won't" on her lips because she had been an unwanted child. We both of us rode away thoughtfully. A long line of Indians went filing up over the foothills, the men on horseback and many of the women on horseback, too; but one aged squaw brought up the rear of the procession afoot with a bundle on her back half the size of herself. We both reined in. My friend pointed with her whip to the old squaw, who was burden bearer, silhouetted on the crest of the hill, and to the girl homesteader's shanty, at the foot of the slope.

"The old and the new," she said; "and the

new is only at the foot of the Great Divide beginning to climb."

Suddenly, she whirled on me in one of her tempest moods.

"Look here," she said. "You know my life and its handicaps: I know yours: what do you think of this whole business of the change in woman's position? It is more than economic. It is really a change in the relation of the sexes."

I answered with a question: "*Do you think the day will ever come when women are not bartered chattels in marriage; when there is no unwanted child; when children will be conceived not in sin but love; and will be born not in travail but in joy?*"

She leaned forward with her elbow on the saddle pommel, and her chin in the palm of her gauntlet.

"It's coming now," she answered pointing to the girl homesteader's shanty; but when we looked up for the aged Indian woman under the huge bundle, she had dropped over the crest of the hill.

"When the dawn bursts in perfect day, I want to come back and see the new type of human race," she went on. "I want to see human beings, not born tired from overwrought

mothers, and kids not born criminals from their parents' blood, and youngsters not born scared and squally at life from the time they open their eyes because of the fright in the heart of the mother who carried them! Of course, there are always confusion and waste and suffering in time of a great transition! Do you think that you or I would have got out for ourselves if life hadn't taken us by the scruff of the neck and pitched us out to sink or swim? Do you think my Aunt Maria would have gone out and rounded up a herd of steers in a blizzard?" (Her Aunt Maria was a notorious snob.) "Of course, it hurts in spots; but that only takes the coward and the slug and the skulk and the shirk and the pretence out of our woman hearts; so that only the fit survive; and I want more than ever to come back and see the new type of human race in a hundred years."

A lantern light twinkled in the girl homesteader's little lone shanty.

"Our great grandmothers did that kind of thing," she nodded down, "two hundred years ago, when this continent was first pioneered and settled. It is we, who are the generation of half-way-ups, neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring! As we have grown in wealth and civilization, instead of working out a new free code of freedom for ourselves, we've imitated

the social code and standards of an effete old world, that is weary of its own life to extinction and is discarding the customs we are taking for the very salvation of our souls."

"The bed is shorter than that a man may stretch himself on," I quoted.

"And new wine bursts old bottles," she laughed. "Let us go home on the lick."

And we went over the crest of the foothills in a moonlight I can describe only as floods of silver. Just where we swerved into a ravine, some settler had been trying out some new drought-resisting variety of wheat, and where we skirted the wheat field, a coyote, earth color and couchant and still as stone, leaped across our trail and loped off into the wheat.

"Chase him! Chase him!" she shouted. "Don't let him go! Let us run him down! Wolves hamstrung ten of our colts last winter. Run him down, run him down!" and off across that settlers' farm we galloped, through wheat heavy headed and high as our saddles, following only by the rise and fall of the wheat to the fore, where the skulking thing would run crouching and then take a flying leap in the moonlight. He was making for the rough

ground of a coteau, where a noisy stream came tumbling down from the mountains.

"Head him off," she shouted. "You keep the field. I'll take the stream bed," and in she plunged girth-deep; but the wolf was too quick for us. He gained the stream and crossed it at a bound. So did we; but when he went up over the rocks, we reined in glowing wet and panting.

"What in the world do you think you would have done if you had caught it?" I asked.

She leaned forward and unstrapped her saddle pocket. Inside was not a book, which I usually carried, but a revolver. (It reminded me of what I had once heard a town man say. "Brute force! Bah!" he said. "There has been no ascendancy of brute force since the invention of the little gun. When women learn to take care of themselves as men take care of themselves, they will be free and strong as men, *mothers of* men, not mothers of cowards and imbeciles.")

She was aglow with health and exuberant life. She turned to me: "Do you know you look absolutely utterly scrumptiously, bumptiously well?"

"I am!" Then it came back to me in a flash. "In returning and rest shall be your confi-

dence": the moving picture films of dreams, the half naked figure flying before the wolves; the vestured and hooded figure of death in the wheat fields, dead ripe below the upper Alpine meadows, where the disimprisoned waters laughed down from the upper peaks; and the whole world was flooded in moonlight that was silver, and the very hills echoed to the laughter and gladness of the waters. She let halloo after halloo of sheer life out of her as we trotted down by moonlight that was silver to the ranch house; and I laughed. This time, the figure did not fly before the wolves; but the wolf fled before the figure, as all wolves flee before womanhood when you turn and face *and fight and pursue.*

It is not part of this narrative to relate how I was begged to remain out in that free open life. The call of the open spaces needed no coaxing with me. Every year from that day to this, I have heeded the call once a year and gone out to the healing of forest and mountain and upper Alpine meadow; but a keener call had sounded in my soul, the call of Life, of zest, of service, of gladness in work, of a part in the great army marching to a new day; and like my friend, I would like to come back in a hundred years and see the new type of

humanity, when suffering has eliminated the shirk and the skulk and the slug and the parasite and the sheep; when the dawn of a new century—woman's century—has grown to full and perfect day! No more book lore for me! No more culture snobbery! No more Chinese foot-bindings of caste upon my soul; but rather life and the thick of it, strife and stress, hard or easy, learning the cohesiveness and solidarity of the Sisterhood of Service!

VIII

IS THERE ANYTHING IN NEWSPAPER LIFE FOR WOMEN?

I did not enter the newspaper world because I thought that I was divinely inspired to write. In fact, I knew that ninety-nine people out of a hundred, who were writing, would have done better by themselves and life over the bake-board, or behind the plow. That is, they would have done better work, saved more money, enjoyed greater security of tenure and extracted more of the flavor, called "happiness" out of life. Nor was I attracted because I thought that writing was artistic, Bohemian, distinguished, out of the ordinary. The real Bohemians that I knew were so constitutionally outside classification that they could not have been anything but Bohemian if they tried; and people who weren't Bohemian and tried to be, always struck me as an elephant that I had once seen at a circus trying to dance the two-step. It was highly amusing for a short time, but it must have been a difficult performance for the elephant. Nor had I ever the slightest attack

of what the Greeks called "the itch for scribbling." It seemed to me then (and it seems to me now), that so much writing has been done regardless of whether the writer had anything new, true, entertaining, or essential to say, that the main point was to be sure you had something to say before attempting to say it. This sounds like a truism; but if you ask the manuscript readers of any big publishing house they will tell you that of the thousands of manuscripts that pour in every year, only about 10 per cent. have anything to say; and only about half that ten per cent. say it so people will read it.

I had taken prizes in the university as an essayist, but it was by accident. I happened to be away when the prizes were offered and was away when they were distributed and really never knew about them till they were delivered at the door. If I had known they were offered, I should probably have embodied every rule under the sun on how to write, and killed my chances dead; but as I didn't know they were offered, I was keen on my subject, and the best art being the art that forgets art in its truth to life, results came my way.

It was exactly so in my entrance to newspaper life. I didn't belong to the army of young girl graduates who, having fleshed their

pens in ink and their vanity in a roll of essays tied in baby ribbon, go forth to conquer; or rather, go forth to singe the wings of myriad moths in the flame of a yellow candle. If ticklings of vanity, of untried adolescent hopes, of printers' itch are apt to be mistaken for the call, for fitness for the job, what is the real test? Just one, the acid test, experience! The point is, be sure you have something to say, plain fact, or entertaining, or funny, or comforting, just something to say. Don't try to say it if you haven't! If you have that plus the power to say it so it hits the public between the eyes, or in the stomach, or in the heart, or in the head, then, you have the call, that's all, though it may take you thirty years to find it, as it did O. Henry.

It was while stalled, or sidetracked, or whatever you like to call it, that winter after coming back from the mountains. I had turned the corner and been pronounced well, but had been forbidden to go back to the game of life; and was reading everything I could lay my hands on, not to invite mental indigestion, but because if sickness, or death, or tragedy shakes down all that is flimsy in your life plans and creeds, leaving you only a foundation of fact, you have

a care, when you rebuild, to use only facts for the walls.

I wanted facts for signposts along the road, whether I got them in literature, or news, or other lives. Before being stalled by life, I used to read only the headlines. Any news of crime, of moral delinquencies, of tragedies, anything vulgar or common, I skipped as Peter, the Apostle, skipped what he didn't like in the bagful of food let down by Heaven in the vision. You remember he called a lot of the bagful "common." Well, I had felt toward a lot of life as Peter did. Though I unconsciously considered myself a first-class little humble, small exemplar of the Christ-Creed, I had a hatred that was positively an obsession of what was common, or vulgar, or coarse, or ignorant. In a word, I was not only an intellectual cad, but a moral snob. Then Life hit me one on the head hard! When I came to, I knew what Christ meant when He said that "publicans and sinners" should go into the Kingdom of Heaven before "these." I had belonged to the "these."

I had not cared for the Kingdom of Heaven as a harp-strumming proposition, but I had most terribly cared for It as a Thing to realize in everyday life, and as a hope when this Life merged in a Larger. Then illness taught me I

was wrong, that the premises had been faulty, that the "publicans and sinners" put it over where I and my kind failed. Now, I wanted to know the facts of Life, not just the facts that might suit my fancy, or taste, or caste; and I was reading voraciously for data that might be guidance. I was realizing that God must reveal Himself quite as much in modern life as in ancient days, in modern laws as in ancient saws, in facts quite as much as in ancient pacts. I pounced on everything and read with an appetite that was a sort of spiritual greed.

It happened that the United States and another great country were engaged in international negotiations on the tariff. Both countries were at the very apogee of the high tariff mania. Neither wanted, nor under any circumstances, at that time, would have dared to offer a low tariff; but to catch a wing of voters in both countries, each was putting up a tremendous bluff, or buff, or whatever you like to call it, of tariff concessions. The dinners and salaries for commissioners and secretaries were costing each country about $100,000. Times were very hard. Money was scarce. The absurdity of this international game of blindman's buff struck me. I wrote something off hot. If I had stopped to consider why I wrote it, or what I was going to do with it, I should

have burned it at once; but I was so obsessed with the idea, that before I had time to cool, I took it down to a stenographer to put in typewriting. Then, I posted it to the local daily that had been giving the fullest reports of the commission.

It must have been the brevity that did it. The article was not an eighth of a column; but it was bursting with the sense of absurdity that had obsessed me when I wrote it. The very next morning there came an envelope with the mark of the daily on the corner that set my heart doing acrobatics in my throat. Inside was a letter, handwritten, a tiny, cramped hand, plainly a gentleman of the old school, asking me to call.

I was scared stiff. I had not meant to be a journalist. I had no desire to see my name in print. I hated, loathed and despised notoriety as the Devil is reputed to hate Holy Water; and here an opportunity, or chance, seemed to be coming my way, like the prizes for those college essays, which I did not know I was winning. I was so aghast that I went straight to the president of the university. He was a wonderful scholar, one of the old type teachers, who taught as they had learned under Sir Willima Hamilton, after the Socratic method, it should have been called the sword method; for

he literally stabbed our lethargy into mental life. He was what I call a Protestant Jesuit. He had all the æstheticism, all the narrowness, all the wonderful depth and height of Jesuit scholarship; but in the oncoming tide of modern thought, he was like a dazed mariner on strange seas.

He had studied under my grandfather, performed the marriage ceremony for my father and mother, and baptized most of our family. Instead of surprise, as I had expected, he burst into a little thin hard laugh attenuated from the stooped chest of sixty-five years' bending over books and blockheads.

"I am not surprised," he said. "In fact, dear child, it is just what I have been expecting. I have been waiting to see where you would break out. I was afraid to advise. I hesitate ever to advise. Each soul must work out its own destiny. *Out,* child! Understand distinctly, I said, *out!* We each must find ourselves; realize the natures God has given us in the activity of life; and it is only when we realize our natures in activity that we are happy. It is *from within, out* always. That's why we ministers of the soul must keep close to the inspirational teaching of the Christ, who gives dynamics to the soul." He paused, looking into space, tapping his glasses on a pile of

papers above his desk and wrapping his clerical skirts about him as a rug for warmth round his emaciated frame. "There is a new day coming," he added sadly. "What it will bring, no one knows; but we can all see the edge of a dawn," he paused; "or a darkness. The day of creeds and heavy draught theology is past." His voice broke there; that had been his life. The hand tapping the glasses on the pile of papers trembled. "Our day," he added, "has passed. We have fought the fight and kept the faith. It is you, the new generation of torch bearers, as mothers, teachers, journalists, free lances, who must carry the light and herald truth as the trumpet of God." He rose suddenly, and took both my hands in his. He was trembling. So was I. I had come for advice, and he had given me, a pagan as to beliefs, a rebel as to faith, a wanderer in the dark, like all the rest of my generation of womanhood, not advice, but consecration. "God bless you," he said; "and God bless you"; and he kissed my forehead.

At the door, as I went down the wide steps of the university, he called down: "I'll see the editor to-night, so you can fill the appointment exactly as he requests to-morrow morning." I turned. He was standing huddling in the autumn wind, gathering his coat skirts about

him as a rug. "God sends the winds called chance," he said, "but we must hoist our sail." Those were the last words of my old teacher, famous for his scholarship on two continents. Soon after I had launched on the seas of journalism, he launched on the wider seas of eternity.

I had gone for advice and come away with a consecration. A consecration to what? The street lights looked misty as I tried to figure it out. I knew very well for what journalism for women at that date stood: "twenty don'ts for husbands"; how to cut a pattern; plum puddings; pink teas; gowns of newly rich. And yet, look back the last eighteen years, with all our veering and tacking, hasn't journalism inched forward? With all our blundering and fumbling, haven't we followed, clumsily, it may be, the flying phantom called Truth? Which modern reform could have been carried out without the preliminary scouting of the free lances, whom my old professor had designated as "torch bearers" and whom our enemies call "muck rakers"? And perhaps, "the twenty don'ts for husbands," the patterns, the plum puddings, the pink teas, the gowns, were to the beginners in this vocation what years of training were in other professions, a testing of apti-

tude, the weeding of the unfit, the grilling in detail; but the point is, the period of grilling has to be passed. How many of the aspirants with high school manuscripts under their arms think of that?

When I reached the newspaper office next morning, I had to climb four flights of stairs, each one narrower and dirtier than the preceding, past dingy windows without a shade, which, in all their history, I am quite sure, had never had the smoke and grime washed off. There was first the advertising office, which wore an air of "You're welcome! Come again!" Then came the job printing department, where the men behind the wickets looked, "You're welcome if you mean business." The third floor was the bindery, where you could hear the presses thumping; and everybody scurried on the run through the hall. The fourth floor was the editorial, where the air was unmistakably, "Get out; and get out quick." Across the hall a little wicket had been placed. I have no doubt many an aspirant has regarded that wicket as the pearly gates barring paradise.

The gates were anything but pearly! They were grimier than the windows; and guarding that gate sat an urchin, the color of printer's

ink, tilted back in his chair with his feet on the table, chewing gum with a motion like a steam sand shovel that opens and shuts its mouth automatically for several tons at a chew. To the left was the reporters' room, blue with tobacco smoke, where a dozen men seemed to be writing at a long slanting table as if pursued by the incarnate. The telephone was ringing. Half a dozen telephones seemed to be ringing; and typewriters were clicking everywhere. Grimy-faced youths in ink-stained aprons went skating and sliding along the hall, telescoping one another as they ran, with long thin tissue paper sheets of telegraph stuff in one hand, long marked up galleys of proof in the other. I afterwards came to know this fraternity as "printers' devils." In modern offices they have been almost supplanted by the chute and tube system. The youth guarding the wicket gate didn't speak. He got his legs folded off the table and slammed a writing pad at me. On the pad I wrote my name, the name of the editor and my references. Then he went sliding down the dark hall with the printers' devils, while I stood at the wicket.

Shades of studious thought; and was this the modern moulder of public opinion? I recalled, with a grim desire to laugh, lectures on jour-

nalism about "meticulous accuracy," "the fine shade of meaning in each word," "the high moral purpose of the calling," those "torch-bearers." I hope that "meticulous accuracy" idea doesn't tickle you as it did me, then! Here, news came in like loads of wheat to a steam thresher—tons of it; and with a deal of rip and grime and grind, rushed out again as a kernel with lots of chaff intermixed! The marvel wasn't that there was chaff! The marvel was there was as much wheat; for everything was done at top heat, top pressure, top speed; and there was no stop. This paper issued morning editions, evening editions, midday editions, hourly ones, when there was any sensation; and it controlled all the telegraph news avenues of the state.

But the boy's head had appeared at the far end of the smoke-blue corridor. "Yep; it's all right," he yelled. "Come on in." I passed through the city editor's office, where reporters were throwing sheaves and bunches of copy on the desk and half a dozen copy readers, with green eye-shades over their faces, were reading and lining out copy, reading like incarnate furies. No one looked up. Then came the telegraph office. We hadn't yet been rigged up with wires of our own. Messenger boys came clumping up back stairs with reams, it seemed

that morning to me, miles of tissue paper telegrams. Another hall; and I was in the office of the managing editor, the boy swinging the door shut behind me.

The editor was sitting in his shirt sleeves behind a stack of newspapers that almost concealed him, with a pair of scissors in his hands the size of pruning shears, cutting and hacking at a huge Sunday edition of a New York paper. He was a fine old pink and white gentleman of the fine old leisurely school, one of the last of his leisurely type in newspaper work on this continent. He had been an admiral in his day, and now held his position by virtue of social connections with the directors of the newspaper. When he didn't understand a subject, or wished to crush a bumptious opponent, he would quote Greek or Latin by the mile. He used to rise to read the classics an hour every morning; and yet, on the rising tide of rush and complexity and commercialism that has swept modern newspapers down into new seas, he was like a baby playing with chips on a maelstrom. He didn't look up when I went in; but he spoke. Here is what he said to this "consecrated torchbearer": "I'm just hunting for some editorials to steal! Gray matter not at a premium in this office to-day! Better

steal 'em than write a lot of punk!" Then, he looked up.

"Oh," he said, shaking hands over his desk and donning his coat, "I expected a much older woman."

I wanted to tell him that time would mend that defect; but I was too stage-struck, or amazed at the quickness with which the door had seemed to open before me and close behind me. It is so all through life. The door of opportunity to go forward to the new is also a door against retreat back to the old. To conquer you have to burn your ships behind you, whether you will or not. He asked me if I would write certain obiter dicta of daily occurrences. I hadn't the remotest idea in the world what that was; but I said if he would tell me, I would try. Then, looking away as to a promised land, he said he had to go to "the Session." The Session was the very heaven of heavens and summit of Western and Middle Western editorial ambition. Our men went East for the winter and got in touch with all the brilliant correspondents of the world, and caught momentary glimpses of the underground working of wires in legislative halls. There is probably no position on a local daily that gives a keen-sighted man more power than his report of national politics. I have known

of men who would pay their own expenses and sacrifice half their salaries to do it. I have known of local politicians, who offered to pay us to let them do it. This editor had been Speaker of the local House in his day. I could see the longing in his eye for another whiff of the smoke of battle. Would I write, say, a column of editorial a day during his absence; and also, say two "sticks," of obiter dicta, chit-chat about local topics, in a Western city then beginning to grow in leaps and bounds? Then, he looked at me doubtfully.

"But you are very young," he said. "Do you mind doing this on the quiet, doing it in your own home for a month or two, till we see how you pan out?"

So I began my newspaper life, going down every day at three, when the day staff had knocked off and before the night staff had come on, passing in my column for the morning editorial and getting a hint from the telegraph editor or news editor of a good topic for the next day. Because such fabulously untruthful and misleading statements are issued about the earnings of writers, I want to set down the figures at which I began. For the topics, which ran about half a column twice a week, I received $2 a column. For the editorial

column I received $14 a week at first; later, $16 a week. Within a year I had established connections with Pacific and Atlantic Coast dailies that increased my income $400 to $500 a year. To-day, though both the population of the city and the circulation of that paper have quadrupled, and with them has quadrupled the cost of living, the space rate is $4, the editorial rate from $25 to $35 a week. It is now the capital city of a large and thriving territory. In New York, Baltimore, or Philadelphia, I do not think I am wrong in saying that the space rate would seldom exceed from $6 to $10; and the editorial rate from $35 to $50, and in these centers, there is practically the pick of the ability of the world. Only the keenest kind of ability, the ability that can make good, has the slightest chance; and the winnowing process is without mercy and without cease. In any other vocation under the sun, with the same grilling, the same experience, the same training, the same ability, the same application, a man or woman would earn five times those figures. There is another point, in other vocations, you build a foundation for your future. Each day's work is a brick in the wall of future security against want. In newspaper work, whether you write well or ill, your ultimate fate is the waste paper basket. If you write

badly, it goes into the individual newspaper waste basket before it is printed. If you write well, it goes into the multitudinous public's waste basket after reading; and not ten readers out of 100,000 circulation will remember who wrote well or ill. In a big public fight, which you will as inevitably get into as you get into your clothes if you are successful in newspaper work, you will get ten kicks for one hand clap; because *pro bono publico* slumbers majestic as the gods of Olympus, when pleased, but roars as loud as the big drum that is empty, when displeased. Your epidermis will presently become as indifferent to praise as to blame; and your most joyous sensation will be the satisfaction of just one more day's job well done. I set these facts down because in addition to the titillations of vanity, the promptings of the artistic to writing, a great many youngsters think that in a writer's career all you have to do is dip your pen in ink, and golden ducats will trickle off the nib. These figures are, of course, only good for newspaper work; not for magazine work, not for literature, where the earnings may be so much less as to be nothing, or so much more as to be astounding.

At the end of four months, I came out of hiding and went openly on the staff. There

were in all departments, perhaps, a hundred men; and I was the only woman. Later, when type machines supplanted typestickers, the mechanical staff was reduced and the editorial staff increased.

I sometimes read in great medical authorities, that women cannot stand up physically against stressful nerve-driving life. In the four years I was on that staff, I did not lose one hour. There was only one man on the staff who had the same record. Did I not feel the drive, the concentration, the pressure? Of course, at times, it was terrific. A rush of double work has come, of elections or war, where we could not afford to double up workers, and we simply all worked regardless of sleep or rest. Were there no evil effects left? Not that I know! I went on that staff the frailest of my family; and I came off the toughest and the strongest. I'll admit that when I went on that staff, I thought deliberately and acted deliberately. When I came off, I had learned to think on the run and act on the jump, and never to go round a corner mentally if I could cut across it.

If the great medical authorities, who are men and therefore cannot know as much about a woman's anatomy as a woman does, will accept a matter of fact as data in their masculine

theories of things feminine; let me tell them this,—what breaks a woman, what peeves her, what harries her nerve-ends into rasping strings, what brings those grave mental and functional disorders about which physicians speak in whispers—is not fulness of days, drive of work, pressure of responsibility. It is one of two other things, either the emptiness of gray days that permit nature to turn in, acid on herself; or the constant presence of something alien in what we love, or hate.

As a woman, let me add another fact to this masculine data of things feminine, and let me add it as a woman's testimony about women, let me add it, too, as the testimony of every life insurance company in the world—the supreme danger to a woman's life, the test of tests of her strength, physical and mental, the drain nervous and spiritual, is not in the ordinary wage-earning vocation, in the hum-drum or drive or bumpety-bump-bruise and thump from out-of-the-home activities, else would life insurance statistics rule against her for these: the supreme danger to a woman's life, the greatest risk to her life, in an anguish, which no soldier has ever known on the field of battle, when the doors of life and death swing open and she hovers inanimate between these two, is in the act of giving birth to a new life; and

if one or two of these great theorists had had a baby or two of their own, not in obstetrics by proxy, but in their own flesh, they would appreciate this testimony. The history of every race of every epoch under the sun testifies to this fact in the veneration of motherhood next to God. To tell a woman that she can stand the strain of motherhood, but that if she dares to essay the lesser strain of some extraneous vocation, she will be annually, diurnally and sempiternally damned, it is, well, it is as the grimy little newsies on our grimy stairs used to say—it is to laugh!

There is another point on which I should like to pay my compliments to the neurotic theorists. They tell us that if a woman ventures out-of-the-home vocations, she will enter into competition with men, so forfeit their chivalry and arouse sex jealousy, or sex antagonism. I worked for four years on this staff, the only woman among a hundred men; and I worked for six years on other staffs in New York and London, where competition was so keen as to be almost vicious; and I never experienced one single episode lacking chivalry, nor encountered what could be remotely called sex jealousy, sex antagonism. Have I never then encountered jealousy? Hundreds of times, of

course; who has not? But never as of a man toward me because I was a woman, but rather because I had permitted a work-relationship to slip into a personal relationship. This does not mean proposals; and it had nothing to do with sex. For instance, I remember a scrub blackguard reporter, who was tolerated on the staff for a few months only out of sympathy for his little invalid wife. He had a trick of writing us all heartrending appeals for money to buy medicine for his wife. One week, one of us would hand out $5; another week, another of us, till we learned that his wife had left him and was earning her living, while the borrowed money was being spent on drunks. The next time he sent a heart-rending appeal, he was asked to come and get the money. I withdrew. Something bluer than tobacco smoke filled that office for ten minutes. When I came down next morning, the legs of one table and back of a chair had gone down in an unrelated smash. Needless to say, the victim of the table legs hated us not only for the last five he didn't get, but for all the fives he had got. I have sometimes traced lies not worth hearing to that abnormal specimen, who finally wound up in the penitentiary. I could give other cases similar to this of antagonism; but it was not sex antagonism. It was friction in work. My life has

brought me in contact with ten men for one woman, intimately and constantly; and I have never encountered this thing called sex antagonism. That it does exist hideously in homes, I am well aware; that it springs up wherever woman or man uses sex as an appeal, I know; but if it exists in the world of work as a jealousy or result of competition, I have not in twenty years encountered it. I am rather proud of both women and men that I can set this fact down.

Or take another case, that of an assistant editor of magnificent physique, of inordinate sleepless ambition to get on; and the kindest heart I have ever known; but he had no education, no daring, and little ability, just a dogged, tense, persistent, day-and-night slavery to work; no bubbles, no joy, no lift on the wings of hope, no song over work. He took himself horribly seriously, and had about a dozen nerves where other men had one. If you will please look at those ingredients very carefully, you will see they have a strong resemblance to the delectable morsels in the witches' caldron of Macbeth. Only one brew can come out of them—jealousy. He would do the kindest things for those under him, and the meanest things to those showing the slightest possibility of going up past him. He seemed to have the

foolish, almost effeminate, idea of social climbers in his big manly frame, that he could advance himself by as much as he pushed others down. I never had ructions with that man; but if I had not studied him out and sidestepped him, he would have done both me and my work serious damage; but his attitude to me was harmless compared to his attitude to many men workers. After the old admiral left, a man came to us as manager, who was almost the duplicate of this assistant editor, except that he had great natural ability, a geniality that soured at nothing, and not an atom of jealousy in his make-up. How the assistant managed it with the directors I don't know; but he had the manager thrown out at a time when the big fellow owned nothing but a wife and twins. And such ambition-meanness accomplished nothing for its unhappy possessor. When war and elections came on simultaneously, that man literally died at his desk. Ten years later, the other man, big of soul as he was of body, came back as owner of the paper. The jealousy in this case can hardly be set down to that sex antagonism which the theorists so greatly fear. In fact, the only occasions when I have seen such sex jealousy aroused have been when a woman tried to use sex appeal as a factor in her work. When the woman worker has done

that, she has used the lowest type of vanity in her own nature and has appealed to the lowest type of attraction in the man's nature; and where these two clash in antagonism, there does not seem to be any stop to the abyss, where they may fall. I emphasize these things because physical disability and sex antagonism are receiving such undue emphasis from the theorists; and they are two factors that in twenty years' work outside the home I have not even needed to ignore, I have simply been unconscious of them.

Perhaps, in this connection it would be interesting to set down that the reason I ultimately left that first staff was because I refused to permit my earnings to undercut a man on the staff. As the West began filling up with population, our paper jumped to almost a metropolitan circulation; and there had been taken in as assistant editorial writer a fine old politician, known all through the West for his brilliant campaign work. I am ashamed to say he was paid by us for this work only $35 a week. When he had been with us about a year, there came one of those crazy mining booms that periodically bedeviled the whole community from '93 to 1900. Settlers pitched their homestead rights to the winds and trekked for the

new gold fields. Farmers practically abandoned, or sold at such a low figure that it amounted to abandonment, fine farms that were just beginning to yield good incomes. We met editorially one day to see what we could do to stem the tide, perhaps I should say, to allay the gold fever. I suggested the thing to do was to play up prominently the fact that, in any one state from Kansas to Minnesota, a single year's grain crop amounted to more than all the precious metals that ever came out of a gold camp. (You can figure this up for yourself. You will find it true.) The chief editor didn't think the facts were available. I said I thought I had them at home. I was asked to hand them to the other editorial writer, who happened to live in the same apartment house as ourselves. Walking home, he turned to me. "Look here," he said. "You've got me in a devil of a hobble! I don't think those facts are available. As you suggested this article, will you do it yourself; and I'll keep to my last, and do a political one?" I did it hurriedly that night, quite unconscious of results. The results were congratulations by wire from every board of trade and grain exchange in the country. This didn't elate us. We were busy on something else; but one morning I was called into the chief's office.

"What's to hinder you giving us twice your usual quota of editorial?" he asked.

"Nothing," I answered, "if I am taken off the day telegraph."

"If you could do that," he continued, "we could let So-and-So go"—naming the political writer.

"And my salary would be?"

"The same, of course. You are only twenty-three, and you are getting half a man's pay now."

"Then I can't do it," I said; and two weeks later I resigned. There were no words, no arguments. It simply struck me as a sweatshop proposition, which every woman must meet, who goes out into the world; and how she meets it determines whether she is to be a factor, or a factotum in the economic world. If she undervalues her own earning power, she must not be surprised if the world undervalues it, too. If her earning powers are what she thinks they are, she will command her price. If they are not, let her take her lesson and increase her earning powers and never whine. When she enters the man's world, she must ask neither odds, nor favors as an earner. I had the satisfaction a few years later to have this man tell me that he had made a mistake in letting me go, that he never dreamed I could take

him up. He had thought from the burdens we were all carrying in the city at that time that I could not afford to resign.

I couldn't; but I could afford less to stay. In my heart, I know this man would never have made this proposition to me if he had known that I was financially able to refuse it. The episode was a lesson to me for the rest of my life. Napoleon used to say—Keep the way behind secure and the victory ahead will take care of itself! I made up my mind always to have some sit-fast acres of my own, a roof over my head free of debt, a fortress, whither I could retire in security, from which the enemy, Economic Want, could never dislodge me; and any success I have achieved in life I attribute to a determined adherence to that policy. It seems to me the lesson is worth pondering by every wage-earning woman. If women go it blind in the economic world, as fully half the total army of seven millions do, their blind procedure will undoubtedly lead to the ditch.

Meantime, I left that staff with less than $10 over my railroad fare to the East. The connections formed from the West now opened doors for me; so that the details of metropolitan life need not be given, except that the fearful stress on every hand in the big cities strengthened that decision in my heart that

every wage-earning woman, who does not want to see her life ditched, must stop going it blind and from the very first plan her home, her fortress, her anchorage against Future Want.

I do not think my fellow worker ever knew why I left. I never told him; but I set down the incident to show that the so-called sex-antagonism is largely the disordered fancy of theorists jaundiced from too much umbilical introspection. As long as we keep in action, up and doing, Life has a wonderful way of keeping our bodies and souls wholesome and in whack; but if you sit down looking in on yourself, poking and prodding and hunting disorders, you will find them if you don't create them.

Nor was my action exceptional. Even as I write these words, a woman's trades union in one of the most poorly paid industries in the United States is contributing a large sum to the married men on strike in the same trade, though the winning of the strike will lessen chances of increased wages for the women.

To revert to newspaper life in a frontier city, there were a lot of advantages in beginning newspaper work in a small place instead of a large one. In large centers, work is so specialized that a writer of "twenty don'ts for husbands," "recipes" and "pink teas" might con-

tinue doing these things all her life and never attain a general knowledge or general training to turn her hand to anything else. I have known special writers in big cities who in ten years never met another soul on the staff but the managing editor. In a small center, if the beginner has aptitude, there will be rush times when all hands will turn in on everything; and a woman will soon find whether she fits in or is a makeshift. This fact should be emphasized; for in the army of young girl graduates yearly looking to journalism as a career far-off fields look green. Longing eyes turn to the maelstrom of the big city, forgetful that preparation and experience are as necessary to win success in this vocation, as years of struggling and preparation are to win a place in the Paris Salon, or Grand Opera.

I began as outside space writer of editorials. In a few months, I was doing my work in the office, cooped off in a little box-like compartment along with the half-tone plates and lead cuts of heroes and criminals. Sometimes, I blush to acknowledge, when the hero did things too unexpectedly for us to prepare a cut of him, pictures of a criminal were run in his place; and none of us knew the difference until afterwards. This was not the designed deception of "the yellow"; but if a hero persists in

dying at the very last moment when a paper is going to press on the very day when a war and an election and a train wreck are straining nerves to the breaking point, you must not blame the printers' devil Johnny too severely, when he comes rushing in for the picture plates, if he picks out Holmes, the wife-murderer, for Holmes, the scientist. Because we were one of the very last of big Middle Western papers to change typesetting for the type machine, we prided ourselves on freedom from typographical errors. In fact, there were times when we were almost ready to offer a $5 gold piece to anyone who could find a typographical error in our morning edition. All right! Behold the pride that goes before a fall! We took one type machine on as an experiment. It set solid lines. If there were an error of one letter in a line, the whole line had to be reset. At the last minute one afternoon, the news was telephoned in that a certain hyphenated generous spender would donate a certain generous figure to put up a monument for two heroes, "who lost their lives in the Indian War." The proofs were dashed in—Generous Spender's name was mis-spelled—that would never do! In the absence of the head proof reader, who was in the composing room running his eye over the galleys of type, I put the hyphen and

the letter in Generous-Spender's name; but trusting to the city editor and proof man being out in the composing room, I did not go out to see the correction. Here is what that type machine did when the corrected line came out in the paper: "Mr. Hyphenated Generous-Spender will donate spzg89ryxt, etc., etc., to the heroes, who lost their livers in the Indian War."

We had an elaborate gentleman, who did a column on society called "Social Salad;" and wrote himself into society by always tacking his own name conspicuously on the end of "those present"; and we had a little man picked up from somewhere, who arranged, stole, or made up, the weekly page on recipes and plum puddings. Whatever became of the people who ate the plum pudding I don't know. I gradually slipped into the habit of coming down at 9.30 in the morning and writing my editorial till 11; then helping to edit the telegraph in the rush from 11 to 2.30; no time for lunch; then, if there were more rush, all hands would turn in and read the proofs till 3 or 3.30. The pace was a wild scramble from the time of entering the office. The hours were short; but it was the kind of work you took home in your thoughts and had in mind at your

meals and slept with over night; for the editorial writers were supposed to look up their data the night before.

Was it worth while, I mean worth while for the average woman? Put it wider still, was it worth while for the average man? Your successful banker, railroad man, engineer, doctor, wholesaler, also takes home his business in his thoughts at night, and sleeps with it, and eats with it, though he may swear he doesn't; but at forty-five, your business man, if he is successful, has a security, a fastness against want, a certainty of tenure. His value is in proportion to his experience. Is that true of the average successful newspaper worker, especially the woman worker?

We were a corporation paper, that is, we were owned by a corporation rated as one of the ten richest in America. By that, do not think that we came down hat in hand every day and licked the hand that fed us, or beguiled an innocent public into mistakes for the sake of that corporation. We didn't. Except during election time, we did not know we were owned by a corporation. During elections, we were supposed to shout for "the grand old party." If the man, who stood for "the grand old party" chanced to be malodorous to the public,

then we were allowed to write on economics in China and Peru. The corporation owned that paper for the purpose of pushing the country and defending itself from blackmail legislation. There were times when we attacked the corporation, itself, when its policy seemed a discrimination against our territory. Because we were owned by a rich corporation, we did what not another paper west of Chicago could do at that time, we refused to boom or advertise the fake mining schemes that successively broke out from Nevada and Colorado to the Yukon. I am setting these facts down because corporations have been so roundly "cussed" for the past ten years, it is well to give even the devil his dues. A newspaper exists solely by virtue of the confidence inspired in the public. The minute it forfeits that, its value to the corporation is lost. The most deeply we ever sinned against the public was in connection with a man put in as governor by "the grand old party." He used to come into our office and write interviews with himself lauding a well-known gold mine to the skies. It was a mine then paying 1,000 per cent. dividends; and as he always put his opinions in "quotes" as his own, we did not feel our blood guilt till we saw those interviews reproduced in the leading commercial journals of London and New York, as coming

from our representative governor. Then we began to make inquiries. Engineers let us into the suspicion that the mine with 10-cent shares, then selling at $1.85, might be a pocket, that would peter out any day. Two of us went in to confer with the chief who had succeeded the old admiral. You will remember his characteristics of ambition and no ability. He didn't snub us. He squelched and squashed us. What were we, lay critics, greenhorns, outside dunder heads, to put our office opinions up against experts? Did we expect the paper to offend the party because Governor So-and-So was blowing off some innocent self-advertising? Anyway, the governor had gone to New York. The thing was over. We couldn't prove the vein would fail. We'd have a libel suit on our hands if we touched the thing; and so on and so on. But alas! The damage was done! A huge international corporation had been formed in New York and London to take over that group of mines and railroads. Shares jumped to $2.85. If I remember correctly, the figure paid was twenty million dollars, good cash, not water. That mine never paid a dividend. In two years the vein petered out; and a capitalist of stainless reputation died of a broken heart because his name on the directorate had

misled investors to ruin. Was it corporation, or party, that caused our sin?

As far as I can recall there was only one occasion when even an attempt at intimidation was made. It was two years after I had left that staff. That was the era when corporations grew rich buying up for a song blanket charters with land grants attached for the construction of impossible railroads over impossible routes. In a series of special articles for London and New York dailies, touching on the opening of the West, which at this time was just beginning to break on us like a dawn, I had mentioned this abuse of blanket railroad charters; the particular abuse was a grant of 12,000 acres to the mile for a railroad across a swamp, the land not to be picked from the swamp area but from the choicest lands of the country. One night about ten o'clock, the chief lobbyist of this corporation, who had been telegraph editor on our old staff, called at my home.

"Say," he said, after friendly preliminaries and reminiscences, "have you done this series of Western development stuff, that's been telegraphed everywhere?"

"Certainly, that's no secret."

"Well, it's a curious way to treat old friends. It will cost us $100,000 to counteract——" men-

tioning a special on a particularly rotten project for obtaining land grants.

"I'm sorry old friends are hit by it," I answered. "I was not thinking of your people, when I wrote it."

"It might prove a boomerang," he said.

I didn't take in what that meant.

"We have agents everywhere. Don't you know we could damn you with outside editors, if our string of newspapers began to attack your work as inaccurate?"

"Is that a threat?"

"No, it's a piece of advice from an old friend. You would not be the first we have turned down."

It is a mistake ever to fly up in a dispute over matters of fact. Something within me felt like a fuse burning near dynamite.

"I wish you hadn't said that," I answered; "for I have nothing to lose; and on your own testimony, you have a good deal."

He left awkwardly, and I went upstairs; and what I wrote about blanket charters left no manner of doubt as to what was meant. This, I sent out in duplicate, one to New York, one to London.

Three weeks later, I met my old friend on the street. He stopped me. "Say," he said, "I'm sorry about the other night. I told them

if they had any more dirty messages to deliver, they could do it themselves."

Whether he had been sent to tell me "to be good" and blundered into the threat, or had been sent to make the threat and was now blundering out of it, I don't know. I mention it as an instance of the fact that the craftiest corporations do not work by whip and bludgeon, they work by indirection, that is so indirect it is impossible of proof.

One fact impressed me daily in the life, it was the tremendous power women could wield and didn't on newspapers. I don't mean as writers. I mean as readers. The average newspaper is not edited for women. It is edited for men. If you doubt this, read the piffle page served up as "Woman's." Read the sneers at new movements for women. Read the innuendo unstated to set suspicion by the ears in social scandals that it is "the woman in the case." Now, with the cost of print paper at its present figure, no newspaper could exist a week without the revenue from advertising. Look over the advertisements! For whom almost exclusively are they written? Take a big Sunday issue! Three-fourths always of the advertising for women only, the departmental stores, the soaps, the cleaners, the stains,

clothes and food and amusement, all with a sole appeal to women. Purely business advertisements, stocks, bonds, real estate, motors, seldom fill more than a fourth of the advertising space. Yet, editorially, women's interests are subordinated in the newspapers. It may be said that news is human, an appeal to both men and women; and that is true. What is man's interest is woman's interest; and what is woman's interest is man's; but that does not explain away the covert sneer at many woman-movements; the salacious, the unclean and the lewd, exploited as news solely for the circulation to be gained in the underworld; and these very papers are the ones whose revenues come from the woman readers of the advertisements. I venture to say that, if women realized their power in this matter, they could dictate the editorial policy of every paper in the country for the highest good of the race. This is but a hint of what the coming solidarity of womanhood may work out, when highest and lowest, and weakest and strongest, march together.

But all this reflects only one side of newspaper work. Corporation organ as we were, we fought the usual battles for children, for purer civics, for the punishment of crime, for the help of the needy. All the legislation for children's aid, delinquency courts and guard-

ianship for children of improper parents, sprang from two little girls coming to the office one night at ten to beg money to buy drink for their mother. The men of the staff told them to come back next morning. I went with them to their home, if a one-ply board shanty without a floor in the section of the city known as "hell's kitchen" could be called "a home." The conditions were unprintable. It was a den of a gang of nine with one woman; and there were eight children. The entire gang lived on the children's begging.

When I went back to the office, we all hammered it out; and most of us were a very pagan lot, indeed. The empty silly mid-summer season was on, when the wires yearly grind out the same old fakes of "the man who swallowed the small alligator," "the eagle that swooped down on the farmer's sleeping baby," "the baby found with a snake in its lap." Just as regularly as news would flag, these perennial old lies would come over the wires. We all talked it over in the reporters' room. Why not "play up the kids" and "kill the snakes" and "the eagles" and "the alligators"? We did, not in solid chunks and sermons, but in editorial notes and human stories and little paragraphs used as fill-ins for articles, that ran short of a column. We didn't make it a big headline cam-

paign. We just kept peppering hot shot into the public's smug complacency, a story to-day, a police paragraph to-morrow, a ten-line editorial on what the public was paying for crime and how much cheaper it would be "to save the kids." The mayor called a public meeting. That winter the local legislature passed its first delinquency court and children's aid acts; and the year before I left that city, as secretary of something or other, I signed a guardian's permission for the marriage to a prosperous farmer of one of those little girls found in "hell's kitchen."

In all big cities, where there is an influx of workers, men and women, there is an hour on a newspaper, when you can pretty nearly read tragedy in hungry eyes. It is the hour before the main edition comes off, about two in the afternoon, and between twelve and one at midnight. Then, the out-of-work nondescripts crowd in to read "the want ads.," before the paper goes out to the general public. In our go-as-you-please office, they used to wander upstairs to read "the want ads." in the proofs. When they were men, some of the staff would turn them over to the city charity departments, or the labor unions; but to me, there never seemed a proper clearing house for the women,

a place of coöperation and quick action to stand between the girl and the park bench. A man can sleep on a park bench all night and come off with but slight damage to self-respect. A woman can't. When she reaches the park bench stage, she is on an edge from which she may drop into a hole in the river, or the abyss. Send a girl, who is hungry and out of work, to a charity organization, where she has to wait for the secretary to see the treasurer, and the treasurer to see the president, and before red tape has run its endless round, something may happen. I have tried it again and again with girls, who came to us, and have come away from charity with a lump in my throat and a fury of contempt in my soul. There are thousands, there are tens of thousands of unenlisted women, able to help, who want to help but will not give either their funds or their presence to charity organizations, where 90 per cent. of the funds go to job-holders' salaries, and 10 per cent. to the needy. There are thousands, there are tens of thousands of self-respecting women, who deserve help and will not ask for it, and can be helped only through the coöperation of the strong with the weak. Lady Bountiful, feeding out charity at the end of a forty-foot pole to sniveling nakedness and want, is

a figure past forever in the World of Work except as a caricature of the Christ creed.

What is wanted is a Sisterhood of Service, to sing together, to play together, to coöperate, to help, to march shoulder to shoulder to whatever this enforced economic revolution in woman's world may lead. Where it will lead, neither you nor I know; but we are on the march. Let us march together! It is in the vacation unions, trade unions, consumers' unions under the civic federations now springing up in every city in the United States that the great hope lies; but at that time there was literally not such a coöperative union of women in the United States.

Here are two examples of the need: One night, I forget what it was that had kept us all on the rasp till six o'clock, train wreck, murder, or something, I was sitting in my cubbyhole of an office among the line cuts of the famous and the infamous, when I heard the stairs creaking to the measured slow tread of a step that I did not recognize. The grimy urchin, who kept guard at the wicket, had gone. The reporters had come in for their night assignments and dispersed. The presses were thump-thumping below, but with not half so tired a pound as our own heads and hearts. I

had sat down to write my editorial for the next day; so that I could rest at home instead of working that night. With thoughts about as fluid as black strap syrup in winter I was thinking up some far-away subject, when a vital live subject swooped down without my recognizing it. The slow dead step stopped opposite my cubby-hole; and a woman's voice asked "Are you——" calling me by my Christian name. I thought it some social self-advertiser, who had failed to boom her wares over the telephone wire; and, without turning, asked what I could do for her. She came in and leaned heavily against the top of the high-roller desk.

"I'm working as a hired girl and waitress in——," naming one of the lowest dives in "hell's kitchen," just opposite the union station, where the immigrant trains came in and out. I looked up to see a woman of twenty-five or six, hollow-eyed with emaciation and worry, but well-dressed and unmistakably well born. "I've been there three months——" I rose, offering her my chair, but she waved my offer aside. "I came on the colonist excursions with my mother from the East expecting to teach; but my certificates were not good for your schools. I placed my mother in the old ladies' home; and this was the only work I could get." She told me her duties were to rise at four in

the morning, when the first immigrant trains passed, and sell fruit to travelers that rushed from the cars to the little fruit shop that acted as a blind for the gambling joint in the rear. The place was kept by an Assyrian of the lowest record. After the first trains passed, she scrubbed the whole establishment; then she cooked the breakfast for a family of five, who slept in one room above. Then, she was supposed to stand on her feet behind the fruit counter till 12 at night when the last train passed. For these services, she received $4 a week. How she had escaped bodily harm I do not know, probably because she was needed to keep a respectable front to the joint. The place, where she worked, was unsafe for a man after dark. I looked over her certificates enough to see they were authentic, though I missed her name.

"How did you happen to come to me?" I asked.

I knew a good many gamblers of a respectable sort in that wild hurly-burly era; but I didn't think that any of them who frequented that low joint would know me. It seemed a passenger on the Pullman that day had run across to buy fruit and asked how such a respectable woman happened to be in such a

place. She had told him in gasps. He had rushed out mumbling he was sorry he was going right through; then just as he jumped on the train, he turned back and called over his shoulder, "See——," naming me by my first name again, "she'll see a girl in trouble through hell if she has to go down for her." She gave a minute description of the man. I have not the remotest idea who he was. I have never met a man of his description.

Sometimes, when body and spirit fag and we lose contact with, or consciousness of, the stream of vital power that flows from the God of the Unseen, it takes a lifting kick, or a slap on the back, or a lash of need to jolt us back into contact with the hidden energy; but sometimes, by a quip or quirk of Fate, we get a rose unexpectedly tossed in the face, and it brings back the fragrance of the morning garden to our souls. This unexpected compliment tossed in my face by a total stranger at a moment when I had been tired enough to heave brickbats at angels brought a feeling of sudden lift to the let-down energies that you can explain in only one way, a tapping of unseen reservoirs.

I thought a minute. We had fought for and elected the Ph.D. at the head of educational affairs, in the local government. I went into another room and called him up by telephone

at his house. I asked if he were ready to do as he had been done by. He laughingly answered, "Yes." "Then, I am sending a woman to you by the next car passing your house, and I want you to play down," I answered.

I sent her off with two street-car tickets and a line on a reporter's pad. Then I forgot all about her and wrote an editorial on "The Evil Effects of French Realism on Our American Idealism."

I hope the lesser gods, what the Indians call "the delight makers," didn't laugh! It is we who are the clowns; not the delight-makers among the gods. Here was Realism, that was Idealism, right under my hand; and I hadn't sense to recognize it. That is typical of much of woman in newspaperdom! We are working the old dead sawdust and punk, while life is quivering to come up under our hands.

Next day at noon, in the rush, of course, when A.D.T. messenger boys were piling in telegraph stuff and printers' devils were shouting for copy, a head poked into my cubby-hole door. "I've got a job," called a face, not the emaciated face of yesterday, but a face with the morning hope of the rose in its glow, "I've got a school at $50 a month; and I'm leaving by the noon train." "Good luck," I called; and I don't know her name to this day.

"Good," says your protected woman behind the security of four home walls, a husband, father, and perhaps two or three brothers. "That's always the way. If a woman trusts in God and takes care of herself, nothing evil can happen to innocence; and there's really no excuse, etc., etc.," ring down the curtain; and let us go home happy. But wait. What if this isn't the end of the play; only the end of one scene?

Scene the Second, the same office six weeks later, time, ten at night, person, a girl plodding up the grimy stairs and looking longingly over the proofs of "the want ads." hanging on a long streamer from a hook on the city editor's desk. After she had been doing that for two weeks, some of the men suggested that she come in the morning and see me. I looked up one morning to find her standing perfectly stonily beside the desk, well dressed and well, yes, well born; but there were certain lines on the face. It was like a face cornered ready to spit at Fate. Young, not over twenty, she, too, had come in on one of the cheap excursions. She had been a governess, speaking both French and German, and her references were excellent.

Now the ghastly part of this human boneyard is, *there is no excuse for a human scrap*

heap. It isn't necessary. This girl needed help, and there were multitudes of hands ready to help her if only there had been a clearing-house to bring them together in time. Please emphasize the in-time! You can gather up bits of smashed china; but you can't cement it back into the same china. She had been too proud to ask for help. The men had guessed her need. She would not ask me for help. In a certain part of our city was a group of women always in need of good nursery governesses. It took less than ten minutes to obtain a good position for that girl. Happy ending again, isn't it? Not by a long shot! Life isn't so simple. A week later the woman, who had employed her, telephoned me that she and her husband had never been so pleased with an employee, she was one of those born Little Mothers made by God; she was so fond and tender with children. Please look at that testimony: it is true of multitudes on the human scrap heap. Two months later, the same woman telephoned me. They had literally fired her out. I don't need to tell more—do I?

What attracted her back to the office I don't know; but one morning, when a woman had me pinioned on the telephone with detail piled on detail of a bal poudré or something for sweet charity's sake, somebody said there was a tipsy

"dove" on the stair who wanted to see me. I stepped out still holding the long string of the telephone. She was there standing with her back to the wall and the look on her face of a cornered thing spitting at Fate—hard, defiant, with slant-wise eyes of laughter at Life, and scorn for me and all my kind of unknowing sheltered women. "Wait," I said, "I'll finish here in one minute."

She moved unsteadily down a step or two, looking back over her shoulder with the hard slant-wise laugh of defiance.

"Can I do anything for you?" I asked, letting the telephone and the bal poudré and the charity swing in mid-air, as I leaned down over the railing. She kept moving down the stair. If I had been older, if I had had any sense, if my head had not been kiting about in clouds of self-righteousness as to "French realism demoralizing our American idealism," I would have let the telephone and the bal poudré and telegraph wait, and gone down the stairs after that girl; but I didn't. I saw her shoulders shrug as she reached the first landing and turned a face of laughing hard defiance over her shoulder—"You—do—an'thing for me?" she repeated slowly. "No—yu'r—too—late." The last seen of her was by one of the men

rummaging "hell's kitchen" for report of some criminal.

And, now I repeat, is there anything in newspaper work for a woman; or is it a Barmecide Feast? In this life, can women drink the full cup, that all human beings crave? Is it a structure built up from foundations; or is it a door from somewhere to somewhere else? Is it a job, or a vocation; an incident, or an accident? However this may be, there is no candle which singes the wings of more moths. Yearly, out of the seminaries, out of the universities, out of the homes, out of quiet retreats where no one dreamed the journalistic lure could reach, come armies of recruits to what they call newspaper life. Is it the artistic they seek? There is no calling where life must be reproduced in replica to swifter order with no time for art. Or is it just a plain job, an ultimate vocation, where you will take out just what you put in? Do the hosts coming realize that success is a result, not an aim, in this life, and that the road up must be a training in all the way, at hard driving unflagging pace? Do girls and women, longing vaguely to be journalists, think of that? Granted that the joy is in the game, and that newspaper work may become the gamiest and most absorbing kind of game, the question is, having learned, is the game worth the candle?

Always it is a vocation where the risks are great, the pay moderate, the tenure uncertain, the hours excessive, the pressure high and constant, with no future, no place for age. If one goes into newspaper life seeking glamour, big wages, easy earnings, security, there can be only disappointment and a throw-back of hopes. If one goes into the life seeking service, to do work that counts, to be grilled into fitness for work that counts, one will find what Rhodes, what Tennyson, what King Arthur, what all other workers have found—So much to do, so little done.

IX

THE VORTEX—A TRUE STORY CONCERNING SUB-AVERAGES

It may be objected that this interpretation of Woman and Work so far deals only with girls who have had the background of education, home, helpful associates. What of the myriads who are thrust by necessity out on life with no education, with no training, with no fitness? What of the tens of thousands in every big city who are plunged into the vortex of driving industry with no home for fortress of retreat in times of illness, idleness, discouragement? What of those, who have either no associates, or only associates, who drag them down? Many a girl has had to choose between a loneliness more unbroken than prison life, without the security of prison life, and associates, that she knew to be detrimental. Shall we pass judgment of condemnation when she chooses wrong? How much better would we have done in her place?

In other words, if you were on the ragged

edge of nothing; if you had no home but such as you made for yourself; if you had no savings and had never earned wages that permitted savings; if you had little strength and were spasmodically losing your nerve from fear of want; if you had no security against want, and lost your job, and couldn't get another, what would you do? Particularly, what would you do, if you were a woman past forty, physically a good deal the worse for the wear and tear of city life; with streaks of gray in your hair that put you at a discount competing against the nimble agility of youth? Having through no fault of your own, started wrong, is there any vocation where you could begin again, where your mature experience could count against the nimble fingers of youth?

Because there is such a chance for every woman out from the vortex of the city's great unemployed, out from under the wheels of the Juggernaut car, I am going to set down, with as strict accuracy to detail as I can recall, the story told to me word for word by one who found a way out, which every woman in like case could follow if she would. At the time of writing this, there has just been a meeting in New York of the city's unemployed women; and women, who had never before in their lives faced an audience, stood up and voiced the cry

for work, for a chance to live. Among the white goods workers alone, it was found that more than 22,000 were working on half time, that is, at wages from $3.50 to $4.50 a week. Among the shirtwaist and kimono makers, 10,000 were entirely out of work, 14,000 on half time. Of the 75,000 women workers, allied with women's trades unions in New York alone, 22,000 had been permanently laid off work for the winter. When you consider that of all industrial workers among women, not a tenth ally themselves with any trades unions whatsoever, it is a pretty safe estimate to say that at least 100,000 women workers in industry are out of work in each of the big cities of the East in winter. This estimate is considered under the mark by the union women of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

What is the cause of it? Not hard times; for this country has never at any era in its history suffered hard times as that phrase is understood in other lands. Transition in styles, such as women no longer wearing yards and yards of white petticoats, may have something to do with one trade; but that is only a surface shift of the great economic current throwing such multitudes adrift.

If you look for the real cause, you will find

it, not in shifting styles, but, as one woman, who began life at fourteen as a cap maker, expressed it, in the perfection of the machine. One machine to-day does the work of five cash girls; one typewriter, the work of a dozen long-hand secretaries; one sewing machine, driven at top speed by electricity, the work of fifty women at hand-sewing; one canning factory, with machinery self-driven and almost automatic, supplants "mother's home-made pickles and preserves" in ten thousand families.

Do the workers, then, curse the machine and mob the inventor, as the weavers did a hundred years ago in England? Not a bit of it! I have never heard the faintest shade of resentment in tone toward the machine. Workers to-day realize that the machine has become the burden bearer of the age, a thing making possible ease of production in a way ancient wizards never dreamed and fairy tales could not invent.

Meanwhile, what happens? Fingers of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen to twenty years old are nimbler, quicker, safer with the swift speeding shuttles, or steel cutters, or pleaters, than fingers of thirty-five to forty. Also in an age when competition is fierce as war of old, and

overhead expenses the heaviest ever known, fingers of fourteen, fifteen, sixteen are cheaper than the fingers of a mature and experienced woman, who has a right to expect to be paid for her knowledge as well as her mechanism.

Good! Turn on the power! Whirl the wheels! Watch the shuttles flying so fast they are a blur to the eye! What happens? Those nimble fingers age twenty-five don't go so fast. The machine power has flagged and fagged the nerve power. At twenty-eight, there is an accident, or broken finger, or a functional smash-up from exhausted vitalities. If you look over large audiences of the unemployed, you will be impressed by the fact that 75 per cent. of the idle are those over thirty-five years old; 25 per cent., those under sixteen. At thirty-five and forty, is it to be the scrap heap? That is the question these armies of women in industry are asking themselves; and the fact that there are any hundred thousand women out of work, who want to work, who are desperate to work, who demand to live unharried by constant Fear of Want—by the Spectre of Gaunt Hunger—is more than the sign of a startling economic transition. It is the century tragedy of a machine age. It is the Frankenstein of our generation, when the horror we have created devours its own offspring.

Is it necessary? Granted these out-of-works are drifters on an economic tide, which they can't control. Are so many hundreds of thousands a year to be permitted to become the flotsam and jetsam of humanity? If so, it will come high in cost for hospitals and asylums and places of refuge. It will come still higher in bitter social discontent and hatred. Socialists say—take over all instruments of production for the public! Doctrinaires say—let the government give these people a job! Philanthropists say—let us give these people immediate help! The first two suggestions accomplish nothing; for they are years away; and the out-of-works are with us here and now, hungry and sullen at life. The last remedy relieves immediate need; but it doesn't go down to fundamentals; and it offends self-respect; and it is like baling out water thrown in by the waves of a continuous tide. It helps; but it doesn't stop. Then, there is the system being tried successfully in Germany and New Zealand and Australia, government insurance against old age and want through a system of small weekly deductions from earnings; but this, like the remedies suggested by the Socialists and doctrinaires, does not relieve immediate want. This system is not in vogue yet, and requires years to bring its beneficiaries any returns.

There is no use saying—these people are *un-fits;* or they would have hoisted themselves out of their predicament by their own efforts. As well tell a man to lift himself up by his boot straps. They are not *un-fits.* They are *mis-fits.* You show *how;* and they will do the hoisting themselves all right. It isn't—what *can a woman do,* which implies a victim in a trap. It is—*what a woman can do,* which implies a way out of dilemmas; so I shall tell the absolutely true story of the woman who found her way out, as nearly in her own words as possible:

"I belonged to that type of family from which so many girls who have to earn their living come. We were neither rich nor poor. We were never in debt; but we never saved. My mother did not believe in the new fashion of women going out to earn a living. She believed that every woman should marry early and settle down with a little family of her own. She did not believe in what you call women-in-industry. Neither did I. I did not think that was what women were made for; and I used to feel a little bit of superiority and contempt, when my old girl friends of the high school began going out to work in offices and factories. We lived in a little New England factory town. If you know anything about factory towns, you

will know that the successful men of the family drift to the city, while the women stay on in the factories.

"You can think anything you like about marrying; but there simply aren't enough men to go round in these little villages, any more than there are in England. Now that it is all over and done with, I know where I made my first terrible mistake and sinned, and have paid in suffering for my sin; but lots of women do the same thing; and it doesn't turn out a mistake. I believed I was doing what it was the duty of every woman to do—marry; and it seems a poor sort of joke now; but I would rather have died young than had my name go on a tombstone as an 'old maid.' That used to be one of the jokes of our house. Well, I married! I suppose at the time I thought I was marrying for love; but I know now that I wasn't, that I married for a home, for a man to support me, as thousands of other girls marry; and I was too young to realize that the man I had chosen, married me as a sort of protection against his own waywardness. He needed support that I couldn't give, that I wasn't old enough to give him. I think we both unconsciously tricked each other. He thought if he married a good girl, it would keep him straight. I thought if I married a smart

fellow, it would protect me from the blasts of the world. You see we were both simply loving self and didn't know it. Our marriage was a cheat on both sides.

"My brother and I had gone on an excursion to New York for the day. The man, I was to marry, was one of the old boys from our high school. We met him by chance on the street, and he asked us to have lunch with him in one of the big Broadway restaurants. Jokingly, my brother turned to me as we were going to meet him in the restaurant: 'There is a catch for you, Sade! Mack earns twelve-hundred a year as bookkeeper in Wall St. and you can judge from his dress and style of living how much he must earn on the side.' My brother always said something like that to me, when I met a likely man. I didn't answer; but I thought a lot. He was the best dressed man I had ever met; and he looked so prosperous. You could see the waiters jump to serve him the minute he entered. Though I was a country simpleton, I had eyes in my head and couldn't help seeing how the necks of all the women in the restaurant craned as he passed. The check he paid for our lunch amounted to seven dollars; and he tipped the waiter fifty cents. Then, he took us to a matinee. At the train, saying good-by, he told us he intended

to spend his holidays back home for the first time in years. My brother looked at me queerly. On the train, he said: 'Mack always was a four-flusher spending. Only thing I have against him is that diamond ring he wears on his little finger.' How could I confess that diamond ring was on my own finger under my glove, where I had promised to wear it till he came up for his holidays?

"We were married at the end of his holidays. The only inkling of anything amiss came from an old maid aunt, who threw cold water on everybody and everything. She was knitting in the corner by the chimney the day before our wedding.

" 'So he is a free spender,' she said. She always clicked her needles when she was going to say something horrid. 'It's all right for them as has it,' clicking very fast and hard, 'but them as has it don't usually spend it; and them as spend it don't usually have it.'

"It shocked my country ideas to find we were paying a rent of $50 a month for our small apartment east of Fourth Avenue near 23rd Street. It seemed a great deal to pay half one's income in rent. At home, when my father earned $60 a month, we never paid more than $10 for rent; but when I spoke to my husband

about it, he told me to leave business matters to him. He would leave household matters to me. It would affect his standing with the fellows, if they thought he couldn't afford as good an apartment for his wife, as these bachelor boys had for themselves. Who the fellows were, I didn't know. Not a soul came to see us for that first year in New York. It was fearfully lonely. I have often wondered if there is no way for all the lonely people in the big cities to meet and comfort one another. I used to be glad to pass the time of day with the hall boy, or the milk man; and there didn't seem any way to form friends, or make acquaintances. I used to clean the apartment and reclean it and walk the streets and parade the departmental stores to keep from being physically sick with loneliness; but in the evenings and on Sundays, when my husband was home, we were very happy. I really think it is that kind of loneliness drives so many young people out to the dance halls, and the moving pictures, and the cheap restaurants. We got into the way of going to the cheap shows on Saturday nights, and to the cheap restaurants for dinner on Sundays. That is all we could afford. Really, we couldn't afford that; but I didn't know it. I used to long for the birth of our baby for company. I had intended to

go up home for the baby; but my father died that winter; and my mother went to live with a married brother.

"'So you won't go up home for the arrival of His Little Royal Highness?' my husband asked.

"'How can I?' I answered.

"He seemed terribly worried. I asked him if finances were not all right. He answered, 'of course!' Would I never learn to leave finances to him? Business was for men; and so on, like that! It was a day or two after that the diamond ring was missed, the one he had given me that afternoon at the matinee. I wanted to have the police question the hall boys; but my husband would not hear of it, that would only put the thief on guard. He would employ a private detective to rake the pawn shops. That night, he was late coming home to dinner. I was wild with anxiety and nervousness; and I could not go out for him. I tried to telephone the Wall St. brokerage firm; but the office had closed for the day. It was a rainy summer night, that brought back the very smells of the rose gardens up home. A hurdy-gurdy was playing, 'The Wearing of the Green,' or something in the street below our window; and a lot of ragged children were

dancing round and round in the gutter. A faint feeling came over me. What if anything happened so that our child would be a poor youngster like those below the window? Had I done all my part? Was the woman's part to let the man support her? In olden days, women used to spin and sew and make all the food. Now, all that is done outside. I can never hear a hurdy-gurdy yet without that same faint feeling, it was a sort of horror.

"There is no use going back over that night. It cripples me to dwell on it. I wanted to send for the police; but was afraid. I sat paralyzed all night listening and listening for steps. By and by, all the steps stopped, and there was nothing but the roar of the Third Avenue L. By morning, I was walking the floor with terror. The minute the clock pointed nine, I called up the brokerage office. The boy, who answered, didn't know who was speaking and for a second didn't catch the name. Then, he said, 'Oh! yes, Mack, he ain't been here for weeks! He was fired for swoipin' office funds!'

"I was stunned. I couldn't believe it. I wouldn't let myself think of the missing ring; but the morning mail killed my last hope. It was a little curt note. It said: 'Don't try to trace me. There has been a mix-up in the office checks. If you trace me, it will end in my

arrest and your disgrace. Better go back home.'

"Home! There was no home; and he knew it. I, who had married to escape facing life and earning a living outside the home, had now to earn a living for two! I was untrained. I was unskilled. I was temperamentally unfit for any kind of work but in a home. I was one of the thousands of helpless women thrown on the big cities, the very fate I had married to escape. I was ashamed to go back to my native place, humiliated and disgraced. There was no place for me there. My brothers had married. One was supporting my mother; and his wife resented that. Our home factories were running slack. There was no work there.

"I didn't come to my senses enough to know what to do till I was convalescing from the birth of the baby in the maternity hospital. I used to think I would be so happy when the baby came; but now I couldn't look at him without crying out as if something stabbed me. Furniture, we paid $1,200 for, I sold to the second hand shops for $300. Of that, $50 went to the maternity hospital, and $50 for the rent of the apartment the month I had been away. That left me $200. While I worked, I arranged to have the baby cared for in the day at a

church nursery. Then I paid $50 for a special course in stenography and typewriting with the use of a machine for practice. That left me $150. I rented a little back hall bedroom with the use of a bathroom, where I could do my own washing and light cooking. This took $3.50 a week. Try as I would, I could not keep my living expenses down lower than 30 cents a day, 5 cents for breakfast, coffee and a roll without butter; 10 cents for lunch near the shorthand school, a sandwich and coffee; and 15 cents for supper, coffee and a roll and soup, or a small piece of meat, a cheap cut; and when it rained so that I had to take the car to and from the shorthand school, I had to skip one meal to keep my expenses down to 30 cents a day. That made my living $5.60 a week. I used to count and count at night, that, at this cost, my principal couldn't last longer than thirty weeks, and I had made up my mind never to spend my last $10. I always wanted enough left to reach my brothers. What if I were unable to learn in thirty weeks? What if I couldn't get a position? The papers were full of accounts of girls lured to dens through advertisements for stenographers.

"It is right here that if some of the able rich women, who want to help, would, they

could save so much suffering and waste. If I could have had some one, who was not knocked silly with fright, to advise me in the hospital, I should not have studied stenography at all. I should have done then what I did two years later after such suffering I hate to recall it. I was not cut out for a stenographer. Spelling and punctuation always bothered me. A sharp word from the person dictating rattled me so I lost my head and made more blunders than ever. The only thing I loved doing and wanted always to do and had looked forward to doing as my life work—was home making, cooking and sewing and housekeeping; but there was no one to tell me there was any market value for these things. I hadn't the faintest idea any more than any other young girl has that *while every other vocation is crowded with more workers than there is work, the one vocation where there is always more work than there are workers, the one vocation where a capable girl can get pretty nearly any price she asks is home making.* I suppose if I thought of it at all I thought of house work as being a servant, stuck away in a basement bedroom off a dark hall next to the ash cans. I didn't know there was such a thing as domestic science. I did know there was scientific nursing; but I didn't take up nursing because I

didn't know what to do with my baby during the years of training. A woman worldly wise would have known all those things and could have told me.

"The other way in which rich women could help is in training such misfits as I was to find and fill and fit a special place. Why should any girl at the very end of her resources have to pay out $50 to learn her job? I had thought of dress-making; but at one dress-making school where I applied, the cost would have been $60; and at a school of design, where I wanted to learn millinery, the charge would have been $40. If the women, who form clubs for struggling girls would provide training for various vocations—yes, even training in cooking—they would have thousands of applicants a year, and could save girls from the employment sharks and fake design schools, where they are bled to their last dollar.

"One other point for the women who want to help—many a girl, when she has finished her training, has not enough money left to furnish car fare; and there begins a weary tramp over miles of city streets to places of possible employment. I have walked ten miles in a day, say from 60th Street to the Battery and back, and gone to a dozen different shops and offices, and found the same sign out on each

door—No Applicants for Work Needed. (Author's note: at the very time of writing this, a firm in New York moved into a large new departmental store. They advertised for 1,100 helpers. Only 500 of the applicants had had sufficient training to qualify them for the work; and of the 500, according to the manager, who employed them, only 50 were thoroughly competent, above the average. The firm was literally compelled to open a school to train its employees for its various departments, giving them a living wage during the course of training. If the associations for the betterment of women workers' lives could keep a roof over the strugglers, while they steered them into the training schools, a deal of waste could be saved, and incompetency, the basic fact of all struggling, could be prevented.)

"At the end of four months training and searching, I did get a position in one of the big departmental stores, where one-hundred-and-fifty other stenographers were employed on the out-of-town mail order department. I got this position through the girl who shared the bathroom with me as a place to cook and wash. She was a manicurist, who received $1.50 a day in the ladies' parlor of the same store. She heard of a girl who was leaving and really

had me slipped in before I knew it. She was a wonderful little thing, French, I think. She had come from San Francisco, working her way across the continent from point to point by manicuring. She had paid her Pullman fare from Omaha to New York by manicuring ladies' nails on the train. I asked her why she had come to New York. She said she wanted 'to see life,' and she 'meant to land some swell guy with money.' I asked her what she would have done in my case. She said before any man 'got' her, he would have to settle so much money on her 'snug and tight' before the ceremony. Her views left me sort of sick; but then, had my motives been any better? She was full of catchwords she had heard at lectures about 'efficiency' and 'average' and 'sub-average' and 'super-average'; about plans to get on. She said she, herself, was only 'an average'; but she meant to be a 'super-average.' She told me one of our women who was a foreign buyer had a salary of $7,500 a year, and that the head cashier or auditor on the main floor, a married woman about thirty-five years of age, got $5,000 a year and had never been caught in a mistake in ten years. She said that both these women had begun in the Chicago branch of the store at $1.50 a week. They had come to work with their 'hair

in pig tails tied with a shoe string.' They were pointed out as examples of what we might become; but the hitch in that was they were perfect fits; we were misfits. They were cut out for exactly the work they were doing. I was not fitted for the work I was doing. I had always been called a perfect housekeeper; and in the matter of buying household supplies and clothes, I could make a dollar go as far as most women make ten; but in stenography, my fingers were all thumbs. I didn't think quickly and grasp the meaning; so that I was always slow. In my work, I was very much a 'sub-average.' I was a fore-ordained failure. My wages were $6 a week; and, looking back now, I know it was more than I was worth. I broke my machine on an average once a month. Twice, the repairs cost $2. I was not docked for them. I often had to do the simplest letters over twice; and though I was called down for erasures, I was never dismissed for my blunders. I think that was because it was so plain that I was trying hard. I had to take a cheaper room, this time at $2.50 a week, so near the store that I would never need to take the street car. Later, I found a room far over on the West side below 12th Street at $1.50 a week. I was now able to cut my living expenses down to $1.50 a week. This left $3 to

clothe the baby and myself. The baby, after the first month, I left with a German woman who lived in the same tenement. She took care of that baby in the day for nothing. I want to tell that; because that is the kind of help that counts for more than the investigations of vice committees, or the lectures of philanthropists. We are told that girls who work in the factories and stores should save for holidays and old age. If any one will tell me how I could save off that salary, I wish they would. One day I remember I was sent from the stenographers' department to pilot an out-of-town customer round the store. She asked me what I was paid, and, when I told her, threw up her hands.

"'Why in the world don't you go West?' she asked. 'Out West, they pay apple and orange pickers $2 and $3 a day. You girls are like our orange growers, before they learned how to distribute their oranges on the market. Oranges used to lie and rot on our ranches. Then, we found out how to distribute oranges; and now no orange grower loses. Why do you stay congested in these big centers like rats in a cellar?'

"I looked her straight in the eye. 'Lady,' I said, 'I don't go West because I can't walk.'

"I don't think she heard me. She was talk-

ing in blue streaks like this—'Perfect outrage to pay such wages! Don't wonder girls go to the devil.' (I wanted to tell her they didn't; not half as much as idle women. They hadn't time; but she never stopped for breath.) 'Women should boycott stores that pay such wages.' (She had just bought a sealskin sacque from us.) 'A law ought to be passed establishing a minimum wage of $12 at the least for any girl, who works.' (What difference would that have made, I wonder! There were lots of girls in our store getting more than $12. It was because I was a misfit that I did not earn more. If such a law were passed, the store would simply be compelled to throw out us 'sub-averages' and double up high speed work for those left.) 'Why, there are millions of homes in the West that can't get help for love or money, not for $40 a month and board. Why do you stay in these city rat holes? Why don't you go West?'

"She might as well have asked me—why don't you jump over the moon. 'Lady,' I said, good and hard this time, 'I don't go West because I can't walk.'

"And that's another way the strong women could help the weak, if they wanted to; but, after all, we have to work it out for ourselves.

Several things impressed me more and more the longer I was in that store. We girls and women were on the wrong tack. You can't get joy out of work unless it is a sort of personal service. Unless you own your job in some sort of permanent way, you won't sing over it. My grandfather was a shoemaker; and he always sang as he cobbled. My father went into a factory; and he never sang. He got crusty and short over his work. Then, speed is the key note of success in modern work. You work up speed; then you speed up more. You live a sort of breathless existence that isn't life. If the machine breaks, a new one is bought. If the operator breaks, a new operative is got. It eats up your youth, and gives you back only a crust of bread. The more experienced you are, the less value you are. That is why so many women workers call themselves Miss when they are Mrs., and wear false bangs, and dye their hair. I began to call myself Miss, my second year. The forewoman told me—'We don't like customers to think we are an old lady's home'!

"Then, John Rockefeller can talk 'save,' to the crack of doom. There is no 'save,' or 'safe' either for us 'sub-averages.' When I moved from our first apartment to the back hall room, I was still in a decent neighborhood. When

I moved to the $1.50 room, the neighborhood was decent enough but it was not sanitary. There was no elevator in the tenement; and there was no ventilation. You could smell stale toilets from the front stair. There was only one dirty bath room for each floor, and perhaps twenty-five tenants lived on each floor —'sub-renters,' I suppose the little manicurist would have called 'sub-averages' like myself. The windows of the inner court were littered with milk jars and plates of butter and meat placed on the ledge to keep cool; and Monday's washing always hung on lines stretched from window to window of the inner court. A wind could blow wash drip across our food. Some of the faces leering round the doors were terrible, fat half-dressed drunken women, and fat half-dressed sottish men. I have no judgment or blame for either the girls or the men. They were desperate for life. I used to feel after the end of the second year that, if I did not have a holiday or change, I would scream out with hysterics at night. I used to waken myself moaning in my sleep. I suppose these girls and men felt the same. They all looked as if they craved terribly for something. Where uptown folks drank champagne over beefsteak, these people had beer over chop suey. I guess they were as much God's children as the up-

town folks, too! Once the German woman, who kept my baby, told me how the priest in her home village used to have his people come and dance on the village green every Sunday afternoon. For us, there was no village green. There were only the movies, the dance halls, Coney Island. There didn't seem any wholesome joy left in work.

"One evening, when the beer drinkers grew screaming noisy, I took my baby, now a wee toddler, and went out for a walk. I wandered from Third Avenue over West across toward Madison along the brown stone fronts. A colored cook stepped from one of the basement doors and threw a tin of potted beef in the garbage can. Before I knew it, I had the most terrible physical hunger for that can of potted beef, for ice-cream, for a 'fizz' drink, for beer, for anything with a taste, a lift, a kick to it, in place of the soup slops I had been living on for two years. I wanted to break out and do something. Then, I knew what sent the girls in the tenement to the beer gardens and back room saloons. It was a craving of systems that were, well, you can't call them starved, but not nourished. A girl's body and soul crave something beside a crust of bread. It frightened me with the same faint sick feel-

ing I had had that night the hurdy-gurdies played below the apartment window. I seemed to know suddenly why boys and girls went to hell. Those drunken leering fat men and women round the door, who often screamed and fought till daybreak had been boys and girls too, once. I think they fought and beat each other sometimes just for a nervous bust. I suddenly felt as if the city pavements were full of manholes that sucked youth down into sewers and cesspools; and surely God meant youth for something else. I thought He meant it for us to pass on to our children; and now I felt something wild and insurgent in me ready to go to hell. I suppose doctors would say that was the mother instinct in me starved. It wasn't. It was the soul and body of me starved for spiritual and physical food. I felt I would either have to harden and deaden; or go to Hell. I wonder if those girls, who go to Hell desperate for life, aren't better in God's eyes than we respectable girls are, who just quit feeling things by letting our souls turn to stone!

"Here are two other places the strong women can help if they want to, I mean with decent apartments and hotels for girls who work; and with cheap cafaterias with nourishing

food for 10 cents; and with places for wholesome amusement."

(Author's note: Mrs. Belmont's suffrage rooms, Miss Morgan's Vacation Committee Headquarters for workers, Tremont Inn, the Woman's Trade Union Restaurant, the Y. W. C. A.'s and other similar club homes did not exist at this time, though it should be emphasized very strongly that, if there were a thousand such club rooms, they could not begin to fill the need to-day, of protection for the myriad armies of youth, whose feet are enmeshed in the economic net of the great cities.)

"I had been working now for over two years, and I had saved not a cent; and I knew other women more competent than I was, who had worked for twenty years and saved not a cent. I was now twenty-three. I had never been really hungry, but I craved everything a woman should have, nourishment, rest, fun, security. Surely, this is not much to demand of life. Surely, God meant us to laugh and dance and sing, to be secure from horror and want. I was only twenty-three; but I was losing my nerve. Why? Because I was, not unfit, but a misfit; and I was lonely with a loneliness that was sometimes a terrible deep black pit. It was just Hell. If I had not had the baby, but no, I'll not admit that, though God knows if

I had not had the baby and any man asked me to have either beer or whiskey with him that night, I might have joined the noisy screams and dancers next door. I could have gone to hell in one jiffy! Anyway, I don't want to shock you and I don't suppose you'd publish it if I did say it, but after that night I somehow never could find it in my heart to condemn a girl in the big city even if she went ninety-nine times and nine, that's the Scripture number, isn't it? straight to hell!

"I made up my mind I'd place my baby in one of those church nurseries again; so he would be well nourished. I wonder, if in the bottom of my heart, I wanted to be free to have my fling. There was a shirtwaist factory down Fourteenth Street way, where I decided I'd try for a position at $10 a week, if I could only keep up the speed for those electric machines. I know you are wondering how I could be so stupid as not to learn that all these experiences were simply driving me from where I didn't belong to where I did belong, and where every woman belongs, into the one thing I was fit for; but I figured this way: $1.50 a week would pay for my baby's keep; $1.50 more would pay for my room. I would have to raise on the cost of food and clothing.

I was going under. Put these at $3 a week. I could still do my own washing and cleaning on Sundays. That would leave $4 a week! $4 a week might mean $200 a year saved, if you didn't mangle a finger, or break down, or lose your job in slack seasons. As I said before, I am not quick. I am 'sub-average.' I am faithful and thorough. Could I risk my certain job for an uncertain try!

"I kept thinking of it all week till Sunday, when I went to arrange for the baby to go out to the country with the church nursery. That last ten dollars, I had faithfully kept all these two years tucked in an envelope pinned inside my dress. If I were a misfit and 'sub-average,' at any cost I must find the place I could fit and reconstruct my life. I must quit being a round peg in a square hole. I must stop drifting; or I would end a wreck. I skipped lunch and spent my 10 cents taking the 'bus out Fifth Avenue. At 86th Street where the conductor calls 'all out,' I noticed a handsome girl in the costume of a trained nurse, wheeling a baby carriage and leading another child about three years old by the hand. No! Don't you think help came rushing out of the rich house to me like the fairy god-mother! It didn't; and it never does. We have to work it out

ourselves; but just as I came down off the 'bus, that little two year old dived away from his keeper straight in front of a big touring car. No, I didn't save his life! It isn't any wonder yarn I'm telling you. I grabbed him by the neck and humped him back kicking to the trained nurse. He fought and screamed; and for a minute, I held the little carriage to keep it from blowing over in the wind. The costumed nurse thanked me without looking up; but a thought had come to me in a flash.

"'Excuse me,' I said, 'but are you a trained hospital nurse?'

"Then, she looked up. She must have sized up in one glance my sallow gaunt face, and shabby genteel pride, and draggled dress. There were tags on my petticoats. Being a nurse she must have known that I had skipped meals.

"'Sure I am,' she laughed. 'I began as a trained hospital nurse; and here I am ending up a baby nurse for this naughty pair! What is the matter with you; and where do you work?'

"I mentioned the name of the big store.

"'And get about twenty-five a month, and spend it all slaving your life out. Well, I'm not sorry for you! You might as well be in

a good home saving as much as the Quane of England had for spending money. If I could spend five years and seven hundred dollars on my education and don't consider it a come down to do what I'm doing, you girls, who are between the devil and deep sea, shouldn't consider your dignity such fine china that it would go to smash over domestic science.' (Author's note: whoever the nurse was, she enunciated simple truth. The Queen of England had less than $25 a month for an allowance as a girl; and the new system of nursing established in many European cities, combining kindergarten, Montessori features and hospital training, costs about seven hundred dollars and takes nearly five years.)

"'Quane,' that is the way she said it. I never saw that nurse again and she probably never thought of me again; but her sound hard sense had sort of kicked a door open out of my trap. What was it the average girl looked forward to as her life work? What was it she wanted? Home-making, the trained nurse had called it 'domestic science.' What was it the average woman was best fitted for?—Home-making. What was the one vocation in which I was not 'sub-average' nor even 'average,' but was always 'super-average'? Home-

making—domestic science—the science for which every other science and vocation exist.

"And here I was among the army of misfits, because I hadn't had sense to find my fit. Was that trained nurse, getting probably twenty a week and board, any lonelier than I in my back tenement room, with not a cent above the margin of mere existence? Was she not safer, securer, happier? But she had called it domestic science. Was home-making a science? I began to figure out what she said about saving. Could I but get twenty-five a month and keep, I could save three times more than John Rockefeller had earned the first ten years of his life. Gee! It made me dizzy! I felt as if I had been having a nightmare and had just wakened up.

"Years ago, what had sent our New England boys and girls into factories? The fact that they could earn bigger money in the factories than in the home; that there were more factory jobs than home jobs; but now, was there a single home in all New York, was there a single home in all the United States, always sure of home help? Was there enough domestic help to go round all the homes in the United States?

"We women had been hopelessly on the wrong tack. We had been shunning training for the one thing we all looked forward to.

I thought of what the customer from the West had said to me—'There are millions of homes can't get help for love or money, for $40 a month and board.' Wasn't it the same right here in New York, where I had been starveling along, where a hundred thousand like me were always starveling along? What was the matter with us? Was it the word 'servant'? Were we such snobs? Was 'servant' any worse badge than 'slave'; and were women, whose very lives depended on permission to operate a machine owned by some man, any better than slaves with a serf's ring round their necks? Why did we shun domestic help? Few of the factory women earned more than $12 a week. The majority did not earn $6 steady the year round. A good nurse help to look after children, a good housekeeper, a good general help could earn at the least $25 a month and board and clothes with two afternoons off a week; at the most up to $40 and $50 clear, that trained nurse must have been earning $100 clear. *What was the matter with us that we shunned this one open door, and batted our stupid brains out against the wall of the impossible in industrial life?*

"What a woman can save is the exact measure of her security against want and danger.

In domestic vocations, she can save practically four-fifths of what she earns. In industrial vocations she can save—what can she save? (State and federal statistics show that the average earnings in industrial vocations are under $6 a week—Author's note.) I could save nothing. I was on the ragged edge of want and desperation, and don't forget the night I craved the can of potted meat! I was on the ragged edge of plain hell. In this vocation, honesty, thoroughness, faithfulness had a market value. Had they fed into the electric-sped-up, devil's inventions of machines? Domestic vocations demanded a uniform. So did our stenographic. We had to wear black dresses with white cuffs and collars. So does a nun's vocation demand a costume. So does the trained nurse's; and that costume protects her wherever she goes. So does an ambassador's vocation demand a costume. Why should domestic help resent a uniform? What was the matter with us? Were we fools and victims of words? Were we to be sneered out of life by prejudice? Were we foolish snobs?

(Author's Note: There isn't a well-to-do home to-day that isn't on the ragged edge of desperation for help; and there isn't a city to-day that hasn't its armies of women, thrown

on the scrap heap by industry, on the ragged edge of desperation for a home. Why don't they come together? Is the washing of dishes so much more repulsive than the washing of small-pox sores by the trained nurse, or the swabbing of diphtheritic throats, or the anointing of syphilitic contagions, which any nurse in every hospital has to do any day of her life at imminent risk to her own health? Are we so democratic in this most democratic of all nations that it is really snobbery that drives a hundred thousand women a year on the scrap heap of industrialism? Let us banish the word "servant," and substitute the word domestic help, as we have substituted the word surgeon for leech! All of which reminds me of a curious experience of my own recently. I was interested in a little girl, who was wrecking her health studying for a vocation she could never possibly fill with financial profit to herself. She was a splendid little housekeeper, thorough, conscientious, careful; and I asked her mother why she didn't let her daughter take a course in domestic science instead of plugging at Latin and foreign languages. The mother looked at me with one long blank stare. "Do you mean—do you—mean—servant?" she slowly glowered. "Of course I don't. I mean the science of domestic life—the chem-

istry of cooking, the botany of gardening, the finances of housekeeping,'' I tried to explain. She almost threw me out of that house.

It may be asked, as the proof of the pudding is in the eating, would I, the author of this book, earn my living by manual labor. What one has done is a very much better answer than what one says one would do. As the narrative of this book shows, I stumbled into mental work because I hadn't the sense or independent vision to see how much happier, healthier and better I would have been taking up manual outdoor work. When health smashed, I learned my blunder. When sweat shop pressure was tried on one in mental work, I made up my mind henceforth never to be without my own sit-fast acres, where I could swat physical facts with my own physical hands. When tired out mentally, yes, I have trekked off to Europe, to Florida, to Grand Canyon, to the Pacific, and to the wilds; but the joy of the wilds has been to me that I could work physically, cook my own meals, build my own camp fires, groom and saddle my own horse, paddle my own canoe, though I have had to ride forty miles at a stretch, and have paddled for hours in storms that drenched me to the skin in ice cold water. Where was the fun? I answer, in being alive; in doing what

I sweet-pleased physically; in proving to myself that my brains were not turning to punk and my muscles to the flabby consistency of jelly; in a word, in getting the Chinese boots of conventional life off my soul, and the strangle-hold of a mummied, mural existence off my body. To-day, I never ask my help to do any thing on my land that I cannot turn to and do with my own hands if I need to. A woman known on three continents as the richest and most talented hostess on the Pacific Coast, a woman who has entertained royalty of England and royalty of India and presidents of our own land, and who has been entertained by all three, told me that when she and her husband were building one of their seaside houses, they grew so disgusted with the slow fumbling pace of the carpenters that when the outside work was finished, they summarily fired all help, and that she and her sister with their own hands finished the entire interior of the house, themselves, including lath work, plaster board, panels, fireplaces, floors, all but the actual placing of doors, windows and plumbing, which required skilled labor. I know another woman famed for her skill in outdoor sports who built her own summer house, except the foundation and walls and roof beams. When I asked her why she did it, she turned squarely

on me, and retorted—"Why not?" So I confess I have no sympathy whatsoever with the half-baked snobbery that belittles and bewails manual work. Work to me is joy not woe; and the wail chiefly comes, not from the worth whiles, who do things, but from the half-way-ups insecure of their own climbing and the parasites, who batten slugwise on the under side of life.)

To resume the story of the woman, who found her way out: "I walked back to my mean tenement lodging from 86th Street, and, as I walked, I came to my decision. Even if I had been fitted, built on wires instead of nerves, for electrified machine-driven industry, where would it leave me at thirty-five? Worn out, with little saved, if a cent. In domestic science, I could save at least four-fifths of what I earned. The next day, I put my application in at two employment agencies for the position of domestic help. Here, again, is a place where the rich women who want to help, can. I had to pay a $2 fee at each employment agency; and the places found for me were neither suitable nor safe. In one, the man of the house was a danger for any woman inmate of that home. I left in a week. The wages were $5 a week. In the next place the woman was

dishonest and unfair. She expected her help to rise at 5 and work till midnight. She was a boarding-house keeper. She paid $18 a month; and I had not been there a week before I knew that she had no intention of paying the wages unless compelled. She tried to make deductions for breakages. If women who can help want to, why not open a free employment agency, where such as I can find the place for which we are fitted; where the character of the mistress and of the house and of the surroundings can be as thoroughly investigated as our characters are; where, if we are not fit, we can be trained to be fit.

"By this time I was discouraged by my change, but not downcast. I knew that my place must exist if only I could find it; but I was now reduced to that last $10 I had kept so carefully tucked inside my dress; for I had been reserving my room and paying the keep of the baby, while I experimented in finding a true vocation. I looked at that $10 long the night I came back from my second failure as a domestic help. Would I break it? Would I not? What had I been keeping it for? I wrote out a carefully worded advertisement—'A place wanted by a thoroughly capable and reliable woman as domestic help where faithful work will be appreciated and situation will

be permanent. The highest references given and required.' This, I placed in a conservative family daily. The answer came within twenty-four hours. I was requested to call on Madison Avenue not far from the corner on Fifth Avenue where I had encountered the hospital nurse. It was a beautiful, well-regulated home such as I had never before seen in my life. My new employer listened quietly as I told her my faltering story. Then, she asked me what I wished to know about her home. It was so surprising for me to be consulted by an employer as to my rights that I could not ask a word. I was engaged at $25 a month with board and uniform and two afternoons a week off, as general domestic help. Though some nights we were kept up till twelve by company, there were other times when the whole family went out, and we had no duties beyond two in the afternoon. When we were sent to the city on errands, we were sent in a motor, or given car-fare. Often theater tickets were given us. We had a sitting room to receive friends. I do not recall that hours of work were ever specified; but the work we had to do was; and when that was done, we were free to spend the day as we wished. I have again and again had pleasant trips with my employer. I often drive in the park with her. In

the summer, we all go from town to their country place.

"I had thought I would resent working under a mistress. Instead, I have found her a counselor and a friend. Once, when a brother, who was on the fruit vessels in the tropics, came to New York ill, she brought him to my room in her New York house and permitted me to nurse him back to health in her home.

"Strikes have come and strikes have gone. Hard times have thrown thousands out of employment; and I have never once known what the fear of want meant. My little boy is in a school; and I spend two afternoons a week with him. Though I began as general domestic help, like the trained nurse, at $25 a month, I have wound up as nursery governess at $35 a month; and now, my mother is housekeeper at $40 a month in the same home. Together, we earn more than my father ever earned in all his life, or than any two of my brothers earn; and we bank four-fifths of it.

"What I ask myself is how could I ever have been such a fool as to welter about on the seas of uncertainty and danger and want in the industrial world as a 'sub-average,' when this, the manifest destiny of a woman, was awaiting me in the safe harbor of a home?"

CHAPTER X

THE MINIMUM WAGE FOR WOMEN

Minimum wage legislation isn't coming. It is here. It has come so suddenly that we have hardly had time to consider, whether it will help or hurt those workers, for whom it is designed. Said one of the leading members of the National Retail Dry Goods Association in the United States, a man, who employs thousands and pays no girl less than $10 a week, no apprentice less than $5—"Minimum wage legislation is coming in every leading community. This is the day of legislation favoring the workers; and the politicians are going after it hard as they can to capture the votes. Don't fight minimum wage legislation! Take the sting out of it by getting ahead of the politicians and agreeing to measures that are reasonable without a single struggle."

Said another member of the same association: "It helps us. It gets rid of the young, who are incompetent and have to be trained, and the old, who are worn out and slow. It

gains the approval of the public. (The public pays for it: we don't.) It means contented employees, increased service, faster work, higher standards." What became of the young, who were incompetent and needed training, and the old, who were worn out and slow, all below the dead line of earning a minimum wage, the speaker did not say. How the incompetent youths were to learn their jobs and the worn-out old to earn their keep, the speaker did not say. Those two burdens would be taken off his shoulders. He was simply advising his associates for politic, self-interested reasons not to oppose the trend of the times, not to do anything that might offend public patronage, or bring the odium of all that may be implied from under-paid women back on the merchant. The public, in any case, would pay for the increased overhead carrying expenses. If the public did not object, neither should the retailer. A minimum wage, to be sure, would throw out all learners. It would shut the door in the faces of the little $1.50 cash girls with hair in pig tails, whom the stores first curry-combed, and then scrubbed, and then trained in a night school, from whose ranks a dozen of the most highly paid women workers in stores have risen, women, who have been on salaries of $7,500 for twenty years. Let it shut the door

in their faces! That was no concern of the retailer. The retailer's concern was public favor. If the public demanded a minimum wage, let the retailer jump to it!

So Massachusetts has her minimum wage law and Wisconsin has her minimum wage law and Pennsylvania and Michigan and Illinois and Utah and California and Oregon and Louisiana are all working toward minimum wage laws. New Zealand and Australia are quoted as examples of the success of minimum wage laws but when England and Germany and the United States each sent commissioners to report on those Australasian minimum wage laws, not one of the commissioners could report wholly in favor of the laws as they worked out. One commissioner reported that the laws resulted in bitter class hatred and jealousy. Another found complaints that they relegated the old to attic life starvation and sweat shop work; and failed to spur the young to individual initiative. Yet, curiously enough, when the minimum wage commission of Massachusetts took evidence on the subject, not a single voice was raised against the law, among either employees or employers. When a very famous leader among women workers went to a big departmental store in New York a few years ago and requested the head to place the

minimum wage at least at $6 a week, he gladly acceded, but in three years it was noticed that all the $6 a week hands, about a thousand out of the four thousand in the store, were under eighteen years of age; and these $6 a weekers were regularly let out as fast as they came up to the $7 class. There were suddenly no more old retainers pottering round that store, scrubbing at $5 a week, packing excelsior at what they could earn. At $5 the store could afford them. At $6 it couldn't. What it raised on the $5's, if you will do a simple question of arithmetic, it saved on the $7's, each class numbering about a thousand hands. That is it raised a thousand $5's to $6's. It held down a thousand $7's to $6, by changing hands as soon as the $6's were ready for $7.

The almost universal demand for a minimum wage for women has arisen from the multitude of careful social surveys made within the last ten years. The cost of living has doubled, trebled, quadrupled. Have wages? White slavery has reared its hideous hydra-dragon head as a commercialized occupation. Had white slavery any connection with women's wages? (I have asked that question of every type of women that I know, the workers, the fallen, the strike leaders, the rich; and their

answer has been an unqualified "no." Personally, I think that "no" a bit too unqualified. While the low wages may not produce white slavery, the lack of nutrition, of joy, of companionship, of security from want may beget a recklessness that pushes over the edge.) So the fact-gatherers went out pencil in hand; and here are some of the things they found:

For instance, in Milwaukee all the poorest women wage earners were helping others. Many lived in basements, stables, tenements. In fifty per cent. of these huddled homes, were people ill of more or less contagious diseases, carried out to other homes by the workers. Rents ran from $3 to $20 a month. In twenty-seven families, the income was less than $5 a week. Over seventy-three per cent. of the factory workers were under twenty-one years of age. Only thirteen per cent. of the workers were paid more than $8 a week: nineteen per cent. were paid less than $4 a week. For this nineteen per cent. the cost of rooms ran $1.35, of board $3—leaving a discrepancy on the wrong side. Only two boarding places had parlors where girls could receive friends. Not a girl, as far as could be learned, augmented her income in illegitimate ways.

In Boston, the commissioners decided that no woman wage earner could live wholesomely

under $10 a week. Of 13,000 cases investigated, forty per cent. earned less than $5 a week. Of those, who earned less than $9, a third lived in rooms without sunlight, half in rooms without heat. None earning below $9 could save. In all Massachusetts, seventy-nine per cent. earned less than $459 a year.

In all the United States were nearly 80,000 saleswomen, of whom eighty per cent. lived at home. Of this number, New York was credited with 15,000, Brooklyn with 7,000. The majority worked under a nine hour law. Father Ryan's investigations showed there were four million men earning less than $600 a year in the United States; whereas, the Russell Sage Foundation Report showed that it required at least $800 to support a man and his family. Of the four millions, three-fourths were earning less than $600, a fifth less than $200, three-fifths less than $325. Look at those facts! Now, seventy-six per cent. of the women workers in the United States receive less than the men at the same employment. These surveys, of course, take no account of the earner, whose total is low because she is lazy and will not work.

In Kentucky, of almost 45,000 women workers, half received less than $5.96 a week; half were under twenty-one years of age. In Chi-

cago, it was found that the International Harvester Company's minimum wage was $8; the biggest mail order house—employing almost 5,000 women—had a minimum of $9.12; the biggest departmental store employing 4,000 women had a minimum wage of $5. Thousands of telephone girls received only $3 a week.

What more natural than the cry "humanize industry"; "muzzle not the ox that treadeth out the corn"; "conserve human life"; "the worker is of more value than the work"? The Boer War revealed the startling fact that British workers were degenerating into scrubs: the men's minimum wage law resulted. What more easy than by the stroke of a legislative pen to enact minimum wage laws for women of $10 or $12 as the case might be? The former figure has been suggested for Boston; the latter, for New York; though the Minimum Wage Commission of Massachusetts considers each case by itself and establishes no sweeping average; and literally, not a voice has been raised against this "humanizing of industry." In fact, the employers have rushed to meet it half way. It is very much easier for the employer to have one $12 a week woman, than two $6's. The $12 a week woman won't need watching and teaching. The two $6's will; but

what becomes of the $6's and $5's and $4's and $3's? Are their wages jumped to $10 and $12 as they expected; or are they thrown out? Remember those beneath the dead line of the minimum wage, are very young, or very old, or very unskilled. In New Zealand, it resulted in those beneath the dead line being crowded into the attic sweat shops. In Pacific Coast cities, where a minimum wage had voluntarily been adopted without any law, employers frankly acknowledged that they henceforth could employ no "sub-averages." In New York, in certain establishments, where a minimum has been voluntarily adopted, the unskilled are let out at the end of the three trial years. In the most highly paid manufacturing plant in the world, the employers openly declare they will accept neither "sub-averages" nor "averages." To maintain their high scale of wages, they must have "super-averages" always.

What becomes of the "subs" under this system? Every advocate of minimum wages sees this dilemma plainly, and solves it—in theory. None has yet done so in practice. From religious enthusiasts to trades unionists, they say, "Adequate provision must be made for the unfit": "Let the State take care of those who can't earn a minimum wage!"

Hold on! No state in all the world has ever consented to do that as far as wage-earners are concerned! I have employed women again and again, myself, whom I have had to dismiss because their bad tempers made it impossible for other women to work with them. Must we, who have learned to keep our tempers, more or less, contribute to a tax for those, who don't keep theirs? I offered recently to send a woman, who was out of work, West, where she could obtain work. She said she didn't want to go because she knew she wouldn't like it. Must I, who go, whether I like it or not, contribute to a tax for the woman, who will go only where she likes it? Another asked me if I could guarantee there would be amusement and recreation; and could I guarantee $2 a day wages. I couldn't guarantee any of these things; for they all depended on herself; and she had not yet given me any guarantee that she was worth 2 cents. Must I, who ask no guarantee, but what I can "put over," contribute to a tax for a woman, who will not try to make good? I do not ask these questions for an answer. They are self-answered; but they show the fearfully deep economic waters where one flounders, when you throw responsibility for the unfit on the State. The State, as Louis said, the State is you and me. Or

take those survey figures: In Massachusetts, seventy-nine per cent. earned less than $459. Must the twenty-one per cent. help to support the seventy-nine per cent.? Germany manages better, of which more farther on.

Two other features have come up in New Zealand. The minimum wage shuts the door of opportunity in the faces of those, who are not even worth an apprentice's pay. The president of one of the biggest trusts in America began as a messenger at $1.50 a week. The late Lord Strathcona began at $100 a year. Several of the most highly paid women foreign buyers in New York began at $1.50 a week. Will the minimum wage bar such as these from finding themselves? Another feature observed in New Zealand was that the indolent worker entering at a minimum wage, on which she could live, lagged and lacked incentive to jump higher, sometimes lagged so she had to be dismissed for laziness.

Are we, then, to allow our women to be exploited by heartless corporations, and heartless machines, and a machine age that steamrollers the weak like a Juggernaut car? Who takes a census of the scrap heap? Is a woman, who must ask permission to live at the will of some employer any better than a slave? You

will hear these questions hammered out with fury, wherever there is discussion of a minimum wage; and, like the other questions, they are self answered. Only in our fury of reform, we do it as we do everything in the United States; with all our might, are we quite sure we are not launching a boomerang to come back and hurt those workers we meant to help? How have other nations tackled this problem? Have any of them solved it? How does the individual regard it? Germany and France and Belgium cannot conceive of the causes that lead to minimum wage legislation in the United States. Their wages to store workers and industrial toilers are only a fraction of the wages paid in America. Yet, they have no scrap-heap problem. Why is this? Because of their systems of insurance against illness and old age and want, which no one has proposed as a preventive or remedy in the United States. We have always been so sure of individual effort working out its own salvation in our democracy that the problem of wages going beneath the dead line of living finds us unprepared and all at sea, with hit or miss remedies, that may hurt more than they help.

Because an ounce of human experience is worth a ton of theories, or one fact from a sin-

gle everyday life is worth a thousand pages of commissioners' reports, I shall set down how a woman worked these things out for herself. She would hardly have done it, if she had not been of German birth with that Continental thrift bred into her which regards the waste of a soup bone as a crime. It has long been a saying in Europe that a Continental family could live in opulence on what an American family throws away. This woman had been taught to regard the throwing away of anything as a cardinal sin. We pat ourselves on the back for "the humanizing of industry" by passing minimum wage laws. What do the minimum wage laws effect? They throw the burden of the dead line, of the increased cost of living, on the employer. He passes it on and divides it between the public, that pays the price, and the competent employee, who can always keep above the dead line. The sub-average, he is compelled to throw out to the dogs. Step the second—let the state take care of the incompetents! But isn't the Continental system wiser, which throws the burden of the sub-average on herself, which compels the sub-average worker to take care of herself?

Here is the story: "It was between 1883 and 1887, in the Fatherland when the German Gov-

ernment first began its illness insurance, and then followed up with its old age insurance. When a girl is eighteen, old age seems a long way off. She intends to marry. It seems terrible, when you earn only $7, $8, $10 a month, to have one mark deducted for old age insurance; another mark for illness insurance. I did not understand that a new day had come, when a woman must insure against illness and want as much as a man; when a woman must go out of her home to do her home job. Besides, we had heard of the great wages paid in America. Women in canneries got, not $10 a month, but $10 a week; so I emigrated to a girl I knew, working in a cannery in New Jersey. They got $10 a week all right. Some of the women, who did piece work, and got up at four and didn't quit till six, made as much as $3 a day; but that was only in the rush seasons, when the tomatoes and ripe fruit came tumbling in. In winter, there would be long layoffs, or work half time; so that the wages for the year didn't go over $500. Never mind! That was five times more than we could save in Germany in five years; but the funny thing was, people didn't save in this America. I was a decent clean girl. I wanted a decent clean room. I wanted a home. It cost me $2 a week; and you could smell cabbage and ham from the

front door. Our car fare cost us 60 cents. Our meals cost us $3 a week, because going to work at seven and reaching home at seven, we were too tired to cook for ourselves. We did our washing on Sundays; but my chum wouldn't let me wear a shawl over my head any more. I had to have hats. I had to have gloves. I had to have new dresses. She said if I didn't, a girl would never have any chance of marrying a smart fellow. By the time I had rigged out as American girls dress, I didn't have a $1 a week of my $10 wages saved; and it wasn't the happy care-free life we had lived in Germany. There were no neighbors. There were no friends. There was no church. There were no friendly dances and outings. You worked from seven in the morning till five. You had to get up at five to get your breakfast and catch the car to your work; and though you quit work at five, it was seven before you were home and had your dinner; and, if you had earned your $10, you were too tired to go out. There was no home life. There was no joy. There were pretty nearly no savings; and I used to get cold with fear when I wondered what would happen if I took ill, or lost my job.

"It must have been '88 or '89 our firm began a system of insurance. It wasn't as safe

as our German Government insurance. They left it what you call, 'optional' to us. We could join or not as we pleased. You paid 25 cents a week. That's $13 a year. If you staid over three years, and took sick, they would pay your medical expenses; or if you died, they would bury you. I didn't like to think of dying. I was not twenty-one. Besides, there was another risk we never had in Germany. If you changed your job, you lost all you had paid in.

"My girl chum told me that figures proved that American girls changed their jobs every three years. In three years, I would have paid in $39, equal to six months' work in Germany. Besides, what if the American firm failed? I would lose my money. A great many firms, as you know, did fail in the 90's. In Germany, if a mark were deducted from my wages for insurance against old age or want, it was paid in to the Government. There was no possibility of my losing that. I was afraid. I had come a long way from my home. I did not join what they now call the Welfare Association of my firm. I believed I could save that mark myself better than any firm of employers could. My mother had taught me, it was a crime to throw away even a bone, which you could boil into soup. In America, it was different. You throw away not only the bone, but

the bone with meat on it. I knew if I had time, I could live well on food costing only $1 a week. Yet it cost me $3 a week for three good meals a day. (Author's note: these are, oddly enough, the exact figures found in the Milwaukee Survey.) So that $2 a week must have been wasted. I was paying $8 a month house rent for one room. In Germany we would have rented a splendid little house for that; and I could have sub-let all the rooms for enough to leave me rich. Waste! Waste! I saw it everywhere; and I was afraid to join that Welfare Association of Insurance against illness and age. What if I changed my job after ten years? I would lose $390. At five per cent. interest, I would have lost over $500, a whole year's wages. It was funny in America. They earned big money, four times more than in Germany; but it went through their fingers like water. They didn't keep it; and what you keep is what you have against want. I had an old uncle who was a miser. He used to say, it isn't what you earn. It's what you save. There was more poverty among workers in America than in Germany.

"Well, about three years after I came out, our firm bought a lot of canneries up in the Mohawk Valley. They wouldn't offer us $10

there, because they said we could get the best of board, clean wholesome food, clean airy rooms, at $3 to $4; but they offered us $9 a week. On piece work we might make as high as $3 a day. Supposing we made $600 a year! Put good board at $200 a year, clothes at $100, that left $300 saved. You will notice I never lost sight of the fact that the working woman must—must—must save! It is the only wall between her and perdition. In Germany we had Government insurance. We had our homes; but in the New Land it was save, or perdition. Suppose with lay-offs, those savings amounted only to $200. In ten years with interest at five per cent., that would be over $2,500; and I would be—say thirty-two. Two marks deducted from my monthly wages in Germany would never amount to that in ten years; so I made up my mind to try our German insurance system against idleness and illness and old age in America; only I would do it myself.

"There was another reason I thought I would go up country. What were we girls in Jersey City? What could we ever be in New York? A lot of cattle herded in tenements and back hall rooms. Who cared whether we lived or died? What a lot of money we were always spending on dress! My chum wore a hat

the size of a farm wagon wheel, that cost a whole week's wages; and who looked at her twice for it; and who cared? We couldn't make safe friends in the big city. In the country villages back home, a respectable girl, who could earn and save, amounted to somebody. She didn't go begging for suitors, the way I have seen these girls with the big hats; so I took the firm's offer; and went up country at $1 a week less than we were paid in the city. I have always been glad I did that.

"There was a little church of about fifty people. There was a Christian Endeavor. There was a young people's social society. I joined them all; and they all helped me; and I felt that I belonged somewhere. Why can't all the big factories be located in the country? Living costs only a third as much as in the city. For instance, for $6 a month, I rented a seven-room house with a furnace; and a brook flowed through the lawn. I sublet rooms to other workers in the cannery at $1.50 a room a month. I rented out four rooms. Those rooms paid my rent. Then I raised potatoes, and kept two pigs, and 150 chickens. After the first year, the fruit from the garden, the potatoes, the pig and the chickens paid all the cost of my living. I could raise a hundred bushels of potatoes. I kept these in the cellar,

and sold them in spring at $1 a bushel. The chickens sometimes gave me as much as $12 clear a week in eggs. They cost me about $12 a month in feed and labor. A man to whom I rented a room off the kitchen did the work cheap. The apples and pears I sold round the village at $3 a barrel. I usually got 3 barrels of pears and 20 of apples. The fruit bought all my clothes after the first year in the country. The two pigs I sold to the local butcher for from $50 to $60 each fall. They cost me in feed about $27 a year, bran and ground corn. Two years from the time I went to the country I could have, not two marks a month, which I would have paid in insurance in Germany, but every cent of my wages. Sometimes, on piece work, those wages amounted to $2 a day; but when the lay-offs came, we were on half time; and my wages didn't go much over $500 a year. I saved every cent of them for five years. Then I could afford what I never could have afforded in Germany, or the city. When I sold the pigs, I bought a good warm fur coat; and every year as I sold the pigs and the chickens, I tried to buy what was permanent—in furnishings or clothes. You bet money didn't go through my fingers like water any more. I always paid 25 cents a week into the church, and 10 cents a week into the Chris-

tian Endeavor and Young People's Social Society. I was superintendent of the Sunday School for three years, and treasurer in the church for five.

"Maybe, you think all these things don't matter to a lone woman; but they do. They make up her life. They make her belong somewhere; and that's what we all want to do —to belong, to be something besides a gin horse on a treadmill like our old gray mare at the factory, that works the chain for the coal chute. That's why men and women marry—to belong, to anchor, to get their roots down, to have something that is theirs, where the world can't come in and throw them out.

"So I say if the employers, who establish the Welfare Associations, want to do good, as you say they do, why don't they build their factories in the country? They could run them half as cheap. My wages were $1 to $3 a week lower than they would have been in town. I have told you about rents. Let me tell you about meat. Usually, we boarded at a straight $3 a week in the city; but one winter we tried to save by cooking our own meals. We could never afford steak or chicken. (I have chicken once a week in the country.) We could afford only boiling pieces. They cost us from 22 to 25 cents a pound. Steak was anything from

28 to 32. In the country, steak was 20 to 22, boiling pieces 17 to 18. If they would only establish their factories in the country, it would do away with these crowded tenements, these housing evils. Men and women wouldn't die cursing, or get so discouraged they won't try, just because they can't get on. Boys and girls need fun. We had it in the country; and we had it respectably. There were night sleigh drives in winter. There were dances in the town hall. There were the church sociables once a month. We didn't need to go to hell for fun. If these rich people, who spend so much investigating, would persuade the factory owners to build in the country, it would do away with half the evils people are arguing about. Of course, department stores can't move out; but the mail order houses could, and the white goods factories, and the cap makers, and the ready made clothes houses, and the fur workers, and nearly all factories. The agitators wouldn't have a job if the factories moved from the cities to the country.

"I have told you about my little house, for which I paid $6 a month. In our village and in the villages round about, were lots of little houses with water and an acre or two of ground, which could be bought for from $300 to $600. I know an eight-roomed house

bought for $300; a twelve-roomed one, that wouldn't sell for $600. A little paint and paper would have made them as good as mine. Seven years after I went to the country, the house where I lived was offered for sale. It had cost $3,500; and was offered for $2,000. Why this decline? Because the factory habit in town has drawn so many families away from the country, that all these little Down East villages are going back, and don't realize what a good thing they have. I had $2,200 in the bank. People said I was a fool to buy. All the villages in the East were going back and back. This village once had a population of 1,200. It now had less than 300; but I figured this way, if I owned my home clear of debt, I would always be secure against want. I couldn't lose it; and failures in big departmental stores in New York and big factories must have swept away all the welfare insurance of many girls. Besides, girls in cities change jobs every three years. I couldn't lose the house. If I lost my job, I could make the rent for it, and the garden, and the chickens, keep me; so I had the title searched, and bought it, paying down cash. I could not have accomplished that in any other land in twenty years. I could not have bought a house in the city in a lifetime; and I now had what would

be considered a rich dowry for any girl back home.

"Mighty glad I was I had it! If you will remember how slack times were before 1900, you will know how our factory had to run half time. If I had not had the rent and the garden and the chickens, my income would have fallen to $3 a week, on which you could only starve in the city; but, with everything, I managed to keep my income up to $500 clear a year. My girl chum had married a man in California; and it was the beginning of the orange grove business, when you could buy at $100 an acre. She wrote me about it. Soon as I had $1,500 more to the good, I took a trip out to visit her! Pretty good, you think, for a factory woman, one house clear, $1,500 in the bank, and a mid-winter trip to California; but it is no better than any woman can do who sets her mind to save—save—save no matter where she is, same as the German system of insurance, only you do it yourself. You needn't think I was doing anything extraordinary. My next door neighbor, a widow, was in the canneries like myself. She had paid for a $3,500 house before she was forty-five, and brought up her daughter to be a teacher. There were a dozen women who did better than I could in the

village. They could work quicker on piecework and make more. Well, I paid $100 an acre down, and bought ten acres of a lemon grove in California. It took about half my savings each year to pay for the irrigation and care of the young grove. My chum's husband did that.

"Perhaps, there is something else I should tell you here. To be happy, a woman wants not only to belong somewhere, but she wants humans belonging to her. She wants a nest all right; but she wants birds in it. She wants it lined with love and home joys; so just before I bought the California lemon grove, I brought my father and mother out from Germany, with the orphan boy of a dead brother. This made me very happy; though neither of my parents lived long after coming to America. My nephew, I managed somehow to send to the high school, where he passed the entrance examinations to Cornell. By working on farms in summer and selling papers in the evenings, he had saved enough money to put himself through Cornell. (Author's note: This boy, launched by a woman below the dead line of the advocated minimum wage, is to-day at the head of one of the largest insurance companies in the Orient—salary $9,000 a year.)

"You ask how my lemon grove came out? I

have had it ten years. Last year, it cleared me $1,200; but it is only beginning to bear; and will do better when I go out and manage it myself. The secret of my success? Not ability! Not brains! I'm only very average! I'm German and ponderous, though I think I go sure! The secret? No secret, just thrift—thrift—thrift, saving a little, no matter what I earned; and when I couldn't save in town, finding work where I could save.

"And now about this minimum wage, that's what played the very mischief! I wish social reformers would put on an apron and come out and do a year's factory work themselves! They would see how these fine schemes work. A lot of books on women, who work, had come out. Most of them were written by women, who don't work. The papers were full of minimum wage talk. Our firm didn't oppose it. Of course not! They had to have the good will of the public; but they saw it coming; and what they did was to pension off everybody over fifty in our cannery, on pensions that ran from $8 to $12 a month. Lots of us had been working at half time at $5 a week, at $3 a week. No more half time! We were knocked off, everyone of us who couldn't earn the minimum wage of $10 a week. I didn't come in for a pension; because I was under fifty. The men and

women thrown out on pensions couldn't live on those pensions unless they had a house. They knocked about from job to job and place to place, poor worn-out people unused to new factories. They couldn't keep jobs in new factories under the new system of speed to earn higher wages. On our floor alone 40 out of 50 were thrown out. In their places were taken, not 50 new hands, but ten raw husky strong boys at $10 a week. If you figured out, you would see that the firm saved a hundred a week on our floor alone through the minimum wage. As soon as these boys were competent to earn more, they were passed out and a new set taken on. That's what the minimum wage did for us. It sounds very pretty in theory. It doesn't work out so fine. What am I going to do? As soon as I succeed in renting my house, I am going out to California to take charge of my lemon grove."

No comment is needed on what this woman accomplished before she was forty-five. Her record has been surpassed by countless others, of whom the world never hears. Complaint is always loud-mouthed. Success is too busy to talk. Untried remedies look easy; but this woman's case is remarkable in that it shows exactly how the minimum wage worked out in a practical case; and it shows how the thrift system embodied in German insurance can be

worked out in the individual life. If minimum wages entail state care of those thrown out, as every advocate of the system acknowledges, it might be worth considering whether the German system of insuring against illness, idleness and age is not wiser than a system that throws a discarded worker between the devil and the deep sea. The employer cannot employ below the dead line. The state has not yet indicated that it will. It is worth while setting down the fact that, wherever insurance against illness and old age exists, the death rate has fallen; and there is no human scrap heap.

CHAPTER XI

AN AWAKENING, OR A REVOLT?

And now we come back to those questions with which this narrative of facts in life set out. Are there any more happy women left on this good green earth? Do all those married wish to escape from the cage? Do all those unmarried wish to break into the cage? Is suffering, such suffering as Jean Ingelow and Felicia Hemans voiced, a necessary part of woman's lot? Is there any virtue, except the virtue of the sheep-type, cowed through stupidity, or timidity, in suffering by women? Does that suffering help or hurt the race? Is there a reason on earth why any child should be born in sadness, instead of gladness, with the taint of sadness in its blood and the shadow of tragedy across its soul, instead of that joy and light which brood over the dawn of all nature's days? Is the unrest among women a revolt; or an awakening? Or is it a readjustment to new conditions?

And these questions are all answered before they are asked. You have but to strip the facts behind them free of pretence and argument; and the interrogation mark behind the question changes to an exclamation of glad surprise. Women are to-day what they have been throughout the history of the race—good wives, good mothers, good "pals," good sweethearts, good sisters. Women in industry are no new thing. Women have been in industry since time began; and the women, who have gone out to factory, to office, to school room, to hospital, to clinic, to platform are but doing, outside the home, what their mothers and grandmothers did inside the home. To take three-quarters of woman's vocations outside the home, and to leave her with manacled hands inside the home, would be to let her beat her life out against the cave wall of a prison cell in an idleness that would be madness.

What, then, of the unrest? What of the wail of woe from the married; from the unmarried; from the idle, who want to work; and the workers, who want to idle? Growth is attended with growing pains. Children awakening have been known to be querulous. Machinery being readjusted often creaks and jolts. The hour of all the twenty-four, when

the fever falls and the patient takes the turn to recovery and strength is always the darkest hour, just before the dawn. If you know anything about the wonderful secret life of the dumb creation, you will know it is the hour when the animals turn restlessly, when the deer steal from their thickets, when the song birds stab the night air with strange notes before the chorus that greets full day.

So do I see it of our own age! Consider the marvelous complexities of the age in which we live!

Formerly, when a woman wished a garment, she carded her own wool. She spun over her own loom. She sewed the cloth with her own hands. To-day, she must not only go out of the home to spin the wool; but she can spin only by permission of the owner of a huge machine, often only by permission of a huge corporation, which controls the means of livelihood of thousands like herself. So of the other vocations that have gone out of the home. Service, she seeks; Service of the Race, which is the only avenue to Happiness for any human being, rich or poor, fit or misfit; and that Service she can obtain only by the permission of some other human being. Sometimes she fails to find it altogether, whether she be rich or poor, married or single. Then, there re-

sults the scrap heap, the untellable tragedy of an utterly wasted life, the desert-dried soul, wind-tossed and tempestuous, drab-gray as the arid dust unwatered by the gladness of giving and getting happiness, whether in the passionate ecstasies of love, or those other as passionate ecstasies of devotion to some work. Is it any wonder there are jolt, clamor, discord? The seekers for Service are lost seeking—that is all; and he, or she, who can shed one shaft of radiance to light them to their place, will be the truest helper of to-day. I do not think the scolds will do much. Women are asking—"What must I do to be saved; to be saved from Self?" "What must I do to find something to do that is worth while?" And the scolds are saying, "Go back and be married"; "Go and get unmarried"; "Drop industrial work and go back to the home"; "Drop the home and go out to a vocation." Women are asking—"What must I do to be saved from Self; to find something to do that is worth while"; and for bread and meat and light, the scolds are proffering the serpent-envenomed tongue lashing of an ancient fish-wife. I am not keen on the scolds. I don't think they will get us anywhere, for the simple reason that what has happened has not resulted from con-

scious choice. It has resulted from the compulsion of necessity.

Take the unnatural conditions under which much industry is conducted! There are factories where as many as 9,000 men are employed without a single woman. There are factories where as many as 5,000 women are employed under a few dozen men. The grandfathers and grandmothers of these men and women worked together in their vocations. In America, they even worked together in their Indian Wars and the subjugation of the wilderness; in monastic foundation and Quaker assembly. To-day, such industrial life has bifurcated the race, with detriment that need not be given here. How we shall work it out remains to be seen; but one highest Service to the Race is practically handicapped. Is it surprising there results unrest?

And we are no longer going it blind. Aforetime, the imbecile was ascribed to the mysterious Will of God. (I know of twelve imbeciles in one reformatory born of one degenerate mother, all ascribed under the old order to that mysterious Will of a capricious God.) The unfit, the prenatal failures, the prenatal criminals all were ascribed to Deity. We no longer utter these pious blasphemies. We stand up to the realization of our own human sins and

blunders. We are doing so much to protect the unfit, we realize that if we do not lessen the supply, our race will be swamped; and that brings us under one of the most piercing searchlights that ever illuminated the path of the race. Searchlights as a rule are supposed to light up the path behind. This one searches the way to the fore. We demand not only the protection of the unfit, but the protection of the unborn. This may mean a decreased birth rate as to numbers. We can stand a decreased birth rate as to quantity if it means a higher average as to quality. Athens, not China, typifies civilization for us.

Nor do I see a symptom of decadence in modern divorce. We called appendicitis by another name long ago and let the patient die. To-day, we apply the surgeon's knife and save the life. I see in divorce not evidence of secret vice, but a life-saving knife. The Service of the Race is the only criterion by which we can judge it; and God is served best, not by kow-towing to what others may think, not by taking out an insurance policy for ourselves to secure a future Heaven of which we can know nothing, but by securing as much as possible of the Kingdom of Heaven for others and ourselves on this earth.

Granted it may all mean a new chivalry, a new womanhood, a new race, a new religion. Have we so little faith in the old that we fear for the full flower that may burgeon in the new?

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